

Future-proofing fathers work



A report on fathers work in Oxfordshire

Commissioned by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum



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This report is dedicated to Colin Andrews.

**Martin Andrews,
Research and Development Worker,
Oxfordshire Parenting Forum.**

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PART ONE - INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

1.1 Foreword by Chris Sewell

I am delighted to introduce this final report by Martin Andrews on the current state of fathers work in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Parenting Forum commissioned this report when its three year funding from the Wates Foundation for developing fathers work in Oxfordshire was coming to an end. Its aim was to assess the landscape of fathers work in the county and to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for further development. The report has done precisely what we had asked of Martin.

I would like to congratulate Martin on his excellent research and his clear and positive way of communicating both the strengths and weaknesses of current practice. Having produced an excellent first report on father-inclusive parenting programmes within the county, this second report offers a comprehensive manifesto for father-inclusive practice. I am grateful to OPF's Executive Committee for its positive encouragement and funding which has enabled the report to be completed and published within an extended timetable.

The report is both a celebration of some of the excellent work that is currently taking place within the county and also a challenge to how we can sustain and develop the work in a period of financial stringency and austerity. The report's conclusions were enhanced at a multi-agency meeting of practitioners, OCC managers and service managers at a seminar in November 2015. They are clear that a multi-agency partnership is needed if we are to take this work forward. The critical factor now is which agencies identify with the agenda of fathers work and are willing and able to provide leadership and resources to provide both direction and capacity.

The key areas for action are:

- **Creating a multi-agency infrastructure to coordinate strategy, identify funding streams and support effective practice.**
- **Ensuring that the new integrated children's service embraces fathers work as an essential contributory factor in early prevention and family support and adopts whole family policies and practice.**
- **Developing and integrating fathers work training into the core training of those using a whole-family approach to supporting children and families.**
- **Commissioners to become aware of how fathers work can work for them in achieving key service priorities and a whole family approach for the county.**
- **Develop local networks of mutual support and information sharing for practitioners.**

It is important at this stage to recognise that OPF no longer has the funding or capacity to provide leadership for fathers work or the means of sharing practice and information. A new structure is needed to take the work forward. What the next steps will be for fathers work will be determined by the response of readers, especially senior service managers, to this report. I hope that this report, with its many examples of effective practice, will be used as a guide to future developments.

Chris Sewell

On behalf of Oxfordshire Parenting Forum.



"I hope that this report, with its many examples of effective practice, will be used as a guide to future developments."

1.2 Report aims

- Highlight current research and rationale for the delivery of father-inclusive practice, including benefits to family services, local authorities, fathers and their families.
- Examine examples of UK practice that demonstrate strategies for delivering effective father-inclusive practice which can be transferable to Oxfordshire.
- Map a timeline of father-inclusive practice in Oxfordshire services over recent years.
- Present case studies of a range of Oxfordshire services that demonstrate effective father-inclusive practice.
- Identify specific father-inclusive practices and strategies used by Oxfordshire services so these can be replicated by other local agencies seeking to include men.
- Highlight any ongoing barriers and service gaps that hinder male carers from engaging with and being supported by local services.
- Consider how including fathers in services meets current agendas for the local authority and the voluntary sector, e.g safeguarding, budget cuts and service value, maintaining outstanding practice and the county's image.
- Present initial findings to a range of local practitioners, managers and stakeholders and UK practitioners and academics at an OPF fathers seminar and include their recommendations in the report.
- Conclude with a series of final recommendations that provide a pathway for services in Oxfordshire deliver more effective fathers work.
- Provide copies of the report to Oxfordshire Parenting Forum, local practitioners, stakeholders from a multi-agency range of services, service commissioners within Oxfordshire County Council and local Councillors.
- Facilitate a working group of local practitioners and commissioners who can respond to the report's findings and take forward the report's recommendations in order to develop local practice.
- Present the findings and recommendations of the report to the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood, the UK's think tank The Fatherhood Institute and Working With Men's UK Fathers Foundation.

1.3 Summary of the report's findings

- **Growth of fathers work.** There is evidence of the development of effective grassroots practice of father inclusive work across Oxfordshire in the last ten years. The most popular initiatives with men were those that used creative ways to appeal to fathers and adapted their approaches to meet the needs of the whole family, e.g activities at weekend and evening times, providing dads with male only groups and employing workers to engage fathers. A Children's Centre known for its whole family approach reached nearly half of all fathers with an under 5 year old in its catchment (47%), double the county average (19.1%) and more than five times other settings (8.4%).
- **Increased access.** There is evidence of year-on-year increases in fathers accessing early years settings. In 2011 the Oxfordshire county average for reaching all fathers with a child under 5 year old was 15.9%, by 2014 this figure had risen to 26.36%. This is a success story.
- **Targeted work.** Effective practice has included increased targeted work with vulnerable male carers. Workers successfully outreaching specific men may account for a reduced reach of all fathers with an under 5 year old in the last year to 23.53%.

- **Gateways to targeted work.** There is evidence that universal sessions such as all male Saturdays groups and weekly stay-and-plays provide a gateway for targeted work, as they provide a venue for contact visits and 1:1 work with men on Child Protection Plans.
- **Multi-agency work.** A particular strength has been that the fathers work agenda has operated across a diverse range of agencies. However, we found a reluctance on the part of some agencies to enter into a dialogue about existing strategies for including fathers.
- **Funding.** The funding for settings and services working with male carers has come from a variety of statutory and non-statutory sources. OCC previously granted funds to OPF to support fathers work in the county. Budget cuts of £6 million to Children's services and the reduction of 200 staff by 2017 will have a significant impact on services for mothers and fathers. The need to find funding for a domestic abuse perpetrator programme is a priority.
- **Diversity.** Participation in services for fathers has reflected the diverse nature of local communities. There is still a need for more inclusion of young and BME fathers by all services.
- **Outcomes.** Outcomes reported by male carers include improved parenting skills; how to be a greater resource to their children and partners; increased early involvement and attachments with their children at postnatal activities; greater involvement in their children's early language and school readiness through play, reading and outdoor learning; increased self awareness of the importance of managing their mental health as carers; reductions in risk to their children by managing substance misuse; reducing conflict during separation; reducing exposure of partners and children to all forms of abuse.
- **Training.** Owing to the lack of father-inclusive training offered by the county for practitioners and OCC managers, grassroots workers have organised their own ad hoc training.
- **Strategic leadership and embedding practice.** The initiatives identified in this report, in response to service gaps, have been as a result of local enthusiasm of grassroots workers. There is now scope for OCC strategic leads to mainstream this practice and ensure policy change by the local authority. Current OCC leads support the embedding of a whole family approach in its new service model in 2017 and the championing of father-inclusive practice.
- **Statutory priorities.** Statutory services have increased their use of fathers work to reduce risk in cases of child protection as it is perceived as contributing to the safeguarding agenda.
- **Fathers as a resource to their children and partners is at risk.** Practitioners see fathers work as promoting the role of men as a resource to their families. Reduction in open access provision for fathers would limit benefits to partners and their children's school readiness.
- **Championing fathers.** A network of fathers workers have formed to champion fathers work, but this has not yet involved OCC senior managers or managers from Health and Social care. Their involvement is necessary to champion and sustain this work county wide.

1.4 Recommendations

This report has identified a wide range of effective practice with fathers including the enabling of male carers as a resource to their children and the support required to ensure safeguarding. This father-inclusive practice is a vital resource both for fathers and Oxfordshire's statutory services. At a time of service reduction by the local authority, it is essential that this effective practice is not lost. The report findings were shared with delegates at OPF's fathers seminar, 'Future-proofing fathers work' in November 2015. Practitioners who attended, including Dads workers, social workers, an OCC Area manager, Children's Centre managers, parenting facilitators, academics and leading UK practitioners made recommendations. We therefore make the following final recommendations in order to future-proof fathers work in the county:

- **Support all practitioners** to deliver sessions in a father-inclusive manner so that male carers are more willing to engage in services and do not feel put off by overly feminised services.
- **Emphasise the importance** of getting more men working in early years and childcare services as highlighted in the Fatherhood Institute's national MITEY campaign.
- **Train the whole workforce in father engagement** and have better training opportunities in father-inclusive practice for a range of professionals, including family support workers, social workers and health professionals so they continually deliver services to the whole family rather than only mothers.
- **Continue to offer universal access for all types of fathers**, such as week and weekend stay-and-play sessions, so that male carers can have equal access to publicly funded services and can continue to be a supported to be a resource and safety factor to their children and partners.
- **Increase the delivery of more effective gender-differentiated services for fathers** in order to maintain and increase current provision for fathers, e.g services for all male groups, at evening and weekend times, programmes delivered by trained practitioners experienced in working with men, in a male friendly environment.
- **Embed father-inclusive practice into existing local services** in order to maintain and increase current provision for fathers, e.g schools and hospitals. This has been demonstrated in this report by a neighbouring local authority that achieved this by building multi-agency practice.
- **Increase the offer of postnatal services for fathers with babies**, such as baby massage and PEEPLE sessions for dads and offer parenting support such as the Fatherhood Institute's Family Foundations and Hit the Ground Crawling evidence based programmes so male carers are engaged earlier and vulnerable fathers on Child Protection can demonstrate positive interactions earlier.
- **Maintain contact provision** at family friendly settings for fathers granted court ordered contact with their children, managed by staff trained in father-inclusive practice.
- **Develop joined up work between OCC postnatal services and the Family Nurse Partnership**, examine data sharing protocols, and ensure young fathers continue to access the full range of postnatal services in the community during or following their involvement in the FNP programme.
- **Commitment by OCC to deliver parenting skills programmes in a father-inclusive manner**, as recommended by the Early Intervention Hub Directory in 2014 and evidenced in OPF's parenting skills programme report 'From the margins to the mainstream'.
- **Adoption of the Dads Test Audit and the use of the 3 magic questions** by family services as a kite mark, assessment and development tool and as a commitment to father-inclusive practice, e.g "Is there a dad in the family? What can be done to help dad? How will this improve family outcomes?"
- **A Fathers' Charter to be considered by the Children's Trust and OSCB** to recognise and enhance the contribution of fathers to safeguarding. This would assist with OCCs statutory duty to reduce risk to children and encourage health services and social care to sign up.
- **Increase the commissioning of leading UK expertise in father-inclusive practice**, e.g, The Fatherhood Institute, Think Fathers, Working With Men, Gavin Swann etc to deliver local strategic planning and training as service delivery increasingly focusses on hard to reach fathers and safeguarding.

- **Services discuss ways to retain a domestic abuse perpetrator programme such as Making Changes and commission Caring Dads** to reduce men's abusive behaviours and increase the safeguarding of partners and children. OCC family services, social care and health services examine ways it can each financially contribute to an intervention, thus ensuring a safety factor is maintained in the county and families step down from Child Protection.
- **Develop a new non profit organisation** or social enterprise that creatively champions fathers work in the county and can attract funding and commissioning from a variety of sources. These include the Big Lottery Fund, OCC, Parish councils, solicitor firms, Oxford City Council, Housing Associations and large local employers of fathers such as BMW and Unipart.
- **New funding streams to be identified for a social media blog and website for local fathers to access information**, such as the OxonDads website and blog that successfully signposts fathers to events and promotes OCC services and fathers work.
- **Widen the agenda of learning and play organisations to include the universal engagement of fathers and male carers as a resource to their children**, e.g target fathers through Oxfordshire Play Association 'Play Days', school events, parent evenings, outdoor learning events, annual Father's Day events.
- **Increase the understanding of the needs of separated fathers** through discussions with interest groups and agencies, e.g Oxford branch of Families Need Fathers, the Oxfordshire Family Mediation service, CAFCASS and local solicitors.
- **Increase joint work between Oxford Universities, family services and practitioners** to ensure evidence based practice and research into fatherhood by academics championing this work leads to greater impact with local male carers and their families.
- **Increase the use of community spaces to deliver fathers work**, e.g Oxford City Council community centres, adventure playgrounds, village halls, with a view to delivering services to both universal and targeted male carers on behalf of the local authority.
- **Set up a register of trained practitioners in father-inclusive practice**, who are available to be hired by the local authority.
- **Enable practitioners working with men to attend professional team meetings**, e.g social care, health visitors, G.P and mental health team meetings to raise the profile of fathers work and promote the benefits to different agencies and their senior managers.
- **Start a monthly newsletter on the OCC website** about current fathers work, including links to new programmes and services for male carers and staff training opportunities.
- **Identify Fathers Champions in senior management, strategic leadership and commissioning roles** in all leading agencies for families, who are willing to commit to a whole family approach and champion father-inclusive practices. This includes senior managers from OCC's new family service model, social care, health organisations and OSCB.
- **Leading agencies for families to agree a joint strategy** for implementing the recommendations of this report. This to be arranged at a designated fathers work Forum that includes champions from Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Health services, District council, Social care, Thames Valley Police, OSCB, OPF Fathers Champions and the voluntary sector.
- **Councillors to monitor the effectiveness** of the new service model for children and families in delivering a whole family approach across their services including specific action to maintain and future-proof fathers work, as recommended in this report.

PART TWO - THE RATIONALE FOR FATHER-INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

2.1 Introduction

The rationale for local authorities and family services to deliver father-inclusive practice is a strong one. Services have a legal obligation to include fathers and a statutory duty to deliver positive outcomes for children and safeguarding. This relies on delivering services that involve the whole family. Research by the UK think tank, the Fatherhood Institute, demonstrates that positively involved father-child relationships correlate to positive child physical, emotional, social, cognitive and academic development. These gains are strongest when services actively include fathers, encourage positive father-child interactions and champion this work in their everyday practice.



Research shows a correlation between low, absent or negative father involvement with a range of negative outcomes in children and partners and these effects are stronger for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This situation is reinforced when services fail to include fathers, men feel excluded from over feminized services and they are not identified, assessed or supported. It is therefore logical that services should encourage all types of fathers to be positively involved in their children's lives, whether they live with them or not, while at the same time providing effective interventions for fathers that help reduce negative interactions or risk.

Agencies can encourage more father-child involvement in several key ways; by targeting the increased engagement of all types of fathers in their services; by developing father-inclusive training for its workforce; by using father-inclusive strategies such as evening and weekend delivery times; by increasing the availability of male workers; by adopting gender-differentiated approaches that meet men's needs better; by reducing existing institutional barriers that hinder men from engaging in and benefitting from services. Government, local authorities, the voluntary sector, charities, grass root workers, stakeholders and senior managers all seeking to improve children's outcomes have a responsibility for increasing the inclusion of fathers in their services. This is achieved by championing the use of father-inclusive strategies in everyday practice. The author would like to thank the Fatherhood Institute for permission to reproduce their research.

2.2 Research demonstrates there are improved outcomes for families when fathers are positively involved

Note: Further rationale and research into children's improved outcomes are provided in part three of the report by Working With Men and in the '1001 Critical Days' campaign case study and in part four on parenting programmes and fathers. The following key research findings are by The Fatherhood Institute's 'Why Dads Matter' (2010) and Elder et al (2011):

- **Positively involved fathers improve the physical, emotional, social, cognitive and academic development of their children, e.g brain development and IQ:**

"Fathers' positive involvement in the month following birth is linked with better infant brain development at one year"

"The babies of more involved fathers show better development and higher IQs at 12 months and 3 years."

"The amount of time that fathers spend with their children day-to-day has a greater effect on school marks than the amount of money they earn."

- Positively involved fathers improve the outcomes of their partners, e.g a reduction in anti social behaviour, poverty, drug use and maternal depression:

"Fathers are the main source of emotional support after birth; how mothers cope with the new baby is related to their partner's ability to support them."

"Greater father involvement in care of the baby and other household tasks is linked with lower parenting stress and depression in mothers."

"The father's understanding of the benefits of breastfeeding is strongly connected with the mother's likelihood of commencing and maintaining breastfeeding"

"Children of teenage mothers with greater levels of father contact have fewer behavioural problems and higher reading scores"



- Positively involved fathers benefit from increased involvement in their children's education, e.g increased self-esteem, developing new skills and having a better relationship with their children:

"Participation by low income fathers in parenting programmes is associated with improved behaviour, increased understanding of child development, increased confidence in parenting skills, more sensitive and positive parenting, greater involvement in child care and greater interaction with children."

"Fathers can often be less confident and skilled than mothers looking after children. This doesn't mean they are less good at it - just that in most cases, they have less experience. Helping them develop their skills can enable them to take responsibility as independently capable, hands on parents."



- Positively involved fathers can be just as effective change agents as mothers, e.g their capacity to develop parenting skills or assist school readiness:

"Fathers are no less effective than mothers in implementing change."

"School readiness in young children is associated with the sensitivity of their father, over and above that of their mother."



2.3 Research demonstrates that vulnerable families are safeguarded better when fathers are positively involved

The following key research findings by Featherstone (2001), Bradshaw et al (1999), Ryan (2000), Gibbons et al (1995), Fathers Direct (2005), The Fatherhood Institute (2010) demonstrates that:

"Children at risk of social problems, poverty and maternal drug abuse, talk and learn better when their fathers provide financial support, engage in nurturing play and are satisfied with parenting."

"Adolescent closeness to separated fathers is linked with good school ambitions and distance from school problems and exclusion."

While participation by vulnerable fathers in interventions delivered by services leads to:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of child development.
- Increased confidence in their parenting skills and more sensitive and positive parenting.
- Greater involvement in infant and child care.
- Paternal care of infants and young children by males from unpromising backgrounds facilitates productive engagement with family and society.
- Child-mother attachment is more secure when child-father attachment is secure.
- Fathers' behaviours and beliefs impact on mothers' behaviours and beliefs.

This research includes a study of 24 highly vulnerable families, in which only one father was unable to reflect usefully on his identity as a man, father and partner.

Research by J.B Scourfield, 'Constructing men in child protection work , Men and Masculinities' (2001) found that:

"Despite the mutually negative perceptions of professionals and fathers, their lack of involvement in the process was usually considered to be a bad thing. Non-offending fathers can have a significant role in the recovery process if they can provide verbal, emotional and physical reassurance to their child."

Research by Stott (1998) states:

"The study found in the sample of abused children, that nearly four fifths of the children had a non-offending father figure. This emphasises the potential value of involving these men in their child's support and parenting needs."

Conversely, a research summary by Working With Men (2016) found that:

Negative outcomes are correlated with fathers who are absent, low attending and have negative interactions with their children and partners, such as lower educational achievement and greater poverty and anti-social behaviour.

2.4 Agencies are more effective if they deliver services to fathers as much as mothers and adopt a 'whole family approach'

The main message from research into the rationale for supporting both male and female carers is that both fathers' and mothers' input is important, separately from each other and together (Pleck, 2010). This means that services that engage with both carers have a greater chance of improving children's outcomes. Research by A.Burgess, The Fatherhood Institute (2009) states:

"If only one parent attends a session, the other may not understand changes the 'attending parent' tries to introduce at home, and may undermine them. When both parents attend child behaviour tends to improve more quickly and positive changes are maintained."

Furthermore, services are more effective when engaging both carers even if they live separately:

"Dads don't always live with their children all the time. These dads are really important for their children and a good course could help them stay positively involved. It can also help the mum and dad think about ways to ensure they present a 'united front' on key issues with the children."

As for delivering a whole family approach, research shows that the first step in increasing men's engagement in a school or nursery setting is to work with the staff to motivate and equip them to encourage father/male involvement as part of parent involvement. A randomised controlled trial of such an intervention in two large prekindergarten 'at risk' US programme sites found an increase from 5% to 23% in fathers' participation in parent-involvement activities in the intervention site over a six month period. No increase in fathers' participation was found in the comparison site (McBride et al, 2000).

While in the UK, systematic inclusion of very vulnerable fathers in an Education Action Zone primary school resulted in some remarkable turnarounds in father-child relationships, including among non-resident fathers, accompanied by substantial improvements in some children's school behaviour, interest in school and school achievement (Mantle et al, 2006). Goldman (2005), among others, has documented well attended 'dads clubs' activities within schools resulting in behaviour/educational progress among individual children.

Using father-inclusive practice initially to embed a whole family approach

For services to deliver a whole family approach they must first develop father-inclusive practice. By offering fathers a range of separate gender-differentiated activities, specifically aimed at men, services will engage with more men who otherwise would perceive 'family services' to be for the sole benefit of mothers. This is particularly relevant to separated fathers who may otherwise not engage with family services at all. Once services have engaged fathers this way, they can then offer interventions that both carers can attend at the same time. This ensures co-parenting is consistent and gender roles can be re-negotiated for the benefit of the child. It is important that agencies that offer services to both genders of carers, whenever at the same time or separately, are then able to 'embed' this into their everyday practice. This ensures inclusive learning and practice continues, should individual workers experienced in father-inclusive strategies choose to leave the sector.

2.5 Being father-inclusive requires agencies to deliver their services in a gender-differentiated manner

In his 2012 book, 'Engaging Fathers in the Early Years', Roger Olley MBE sets out the need for services to reflect on their father-inclusive practice and how this can be achieved. Roger Olley states that those responsible for delivering interventions should be able to acknowledge the three distinct approaches to working with mothers and fathers and adapt their strategies accordingly:

AGNOSTIC - Services have no identified approach to working with men as they have not thought about it. An example being a 'mixed gender' intervention delivered in the daytime by female facilitators for the primary benefit of female carers.

GENDER NEUTRAL - Services which regard men as the same as women and offer the same services, courses and resources to women and men as they have made a conscious decision. An example being an intervention delivered in the evening, by male or female facilitators to the whole family rather than targeting fathers separately.

GENDER DIFFERENTIATED - Services which regard men and women as having different needs which need to be addressed differently, requiring the provision of different experiences, courses and resources for men in order to attract them to the service & maintain their engagement. An example being an intervention delivered in the evening, by male facilitators, for the sole benefit of a male carer only group.



"Fathers interact with their children differently than mothers: fathers engage more in playful social interactions than in practical care taking tasks."

'Why Dads Matter', The Fatherhood Institute (2010)

2.6 Being father-inclusive is an equality and legislative requirement

There are strong UK policy drivers for engaging with fathers. Examples of policy documents that require the inclusion of fathers in services include:

Every Parent Matters (DfES 2007)

"irrespective of the degree of involvement they have in the care of their children, fathers should be offered routinely the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively"

The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000)

"the parenting tasks undertaken by fathers or father figures should be addressed alongside those of mothers or mother figures"

■ The Equality Act & Local Authority services for fathers:

This includes a duty to gender equality and with the impact assessment of services funded by the public sector it requires them to ensure that their services and service users are not disadvantaged on the grounds of gender and that services meet the needs of both sexes.

■ The Children and Families Act 2014:

Latest UK legislation ensures there is now an expectation of the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, including separated fathers. Early years services are required to meet the needs of the whole family and therefore will need to include both genders of separated carers seeking to be involved in their children's lives. In order to do this, services will need to demonstrate that separated fathers have access to services and programmes as much as separated mothers.

"The Act sends a clear signal to separated parents that courts will take account of the principle that both should continue to be involved in their children's lives where that is safe and consistent with the child's welfare." Children and Families Act 2014

2.7 If local authorities do not adopt father-inclusive practices they are not being cost effective and are wasting money

Including fathers could boost child outcomes and save taxpayers' money, says a global research review, published in September 2014. The review by researchers at Yale University and the Fatherhood Institute published in the Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, found that fathers are largely ignored by programmes in the UK and elsewhere. Programmes rarely attempt to engage with fathers or evaluate their impact on key outcomes for both parents, such as parenting and co-parenting quality, family functioning, parental stress or depression, or a range of child health outcomes.



Cost-effectiveness analysis is also rare, but some studies suggest interventions can produce a healthy return on investment and research shows clearly that programmes work best where both parents are engaged, so well-designed, father-inclusive programmes should be more cost-effective. In his commentary on the research review in the same journal, leading UK child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Paul Ramchandani of Imperial College, London, added that Britain's child and adolescent mental health services need to engage both parents right from the earliest point of contact, and change the way they engage and work with fathers throughout the clinical journey; and that all early years providers should focus provision on families, as opposed to just mothers and infants.

"We hear too many stories from men who feel sidelined by services provided for their children. The active engagement of both parents or carers is of such potential benefit to children in the vast majority of cases that to ignore the opportunity to change seems wasteful."

"The review confirms that those who commission, design and provide support to families are failing children, imposing too much responsibility on mothers and wasting taxpayers' money. Outcomes are undermined when the other parent, usually the father, doesn't understand what's going on and isn't 'on board'. As we said in the review, it's time for a game change."

PART THREE - CASE STUDIES OF NATIONAL FATHER-INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

3.1 Introduction by Shane Ryan, CEO of Working With Men

Working With Men (WWM) is a not-for-profit organisation working to ensure that fathers are supported to be actively engaged in the lives of their children. WWM has deep knowledge of why fathers matter, how to work with them, and what needs to change so that the work WWM has pioneered can be embedded into policy and practice.

"Parenting can be hugely rewarding. It is a life-defining role which inspires us in times of trouble. It reminds us of why we work so hard and it can help us to make good rather than bad decisions. Earlier this year MenCare produced the 'State of the Worlds' Fathers Report as part of a global fatherhood campaign. For those of us working with fathers, or for many in early years, the information shared in this report comes as no surprise. That situation is put into perspective by the staggering 80% of men that will become biological fathers at some point in their lives. What is worrying for us in the UK is that the dearth of services ready or willing to accommodate fathers, or the notion of shared parenting, is worldwide.

Research is clear that fathers are important for their child's development. Father-child relationships, whether positive, negative or absent, have wide-ranging effects on children that extend into adulthood. These effects are stronger for children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. There are strong correlations between father involvement and children's physical, emotional, social, cognitive and academic development. Conversely, low father contact is correlated with a range of negative outcomes in children. Interventions to improve the nature of father-child relationships can improve outcomes for children and be instrumental in increasing social mobility. Children themselves tell us how important dad is to them. Even in cases where fathers are not involved in their lives, children report that this is something they regret and wish was different. But engaging men in services to support, enhance, and promote positive involvement with their children is challenging. This is possibly one of the reasons for the lack of coordinated initiatives relating to fathers development in the UK. Child care has historically been a feminised environment with, according to recent figures, fewer than 2% of staff working in early years and childcare in England being men.

So often men, and the practitioners working with them, lack confidence or any historical terms of reference to fall back on during their interactions. Additionally, you cannot ignore the power of male conditioning. Men themselves can carry the hugely negative idea that their role is that of the "walking wallet" and that fatherhood is primarily a financial obligation. Culturally, there appears to be a growing resistance to this perception as more men take on the shared role of care giver and engage with family services. This report clearly demonstrates that this shift has taken place in Oxfordshire. It is so encouraging to see the emergence of father-inclusive work across Oxfordshire in the last ten years. Nationally, there have been some significant steps towards promoting positive fatherhood. In October 2014, new rights for fathers and partners



"It is so encouraging to see the emergence of father-inclusive work across Oxfordshire in the last ten years."



were introduced to allow them to take time off work to accompany their pregnant partner to antenatal appointments. Earlier this year Richard Branson announced that staff working for Virgin Management would receive up to a year's full pay of paternity leave. In 2015 the introduction of Shared Parental Leave seems to be welcomed by both mothers and fathers alike.

But there are other policies which actually make it harder for single dads to spend time with their children. In 2012, changes meant that single people under 35 can now only claim benefit for a single room in a shared house. In practice, it means that children coming to spend time with their dad are likely to have to share a bathroom with complete strangers. And there are further plans to withdraw housing benefit from under 21's, creating more pressure for vulnerable young fathers who want to have time with their child. This is even more worrying since this year's Modern Families Index (2015) tells us that; "younger fathers are more involved with their children, and want to be even more involved but are finding workplace culture is out of sync with this". Even with all of the mounting evidence that positively involved fathers change the lives of children, mothers and themselves, fathers development is still seen as an "add on" or as a "non-essential" service. This sends a message to wider society and stops us from moving forward.

"Our experience and the evidence base at Working With Men tells us that change must be facilitated in partnership and co-production with statutory services as well as fathers themselves and that the statutory services must see why it is important from their point of view as well as ours."

Changing attitudes towards fathers involves showing statutory services the way, using methods and policy they can understand and establishing a robust "core offer" for fathers. It also involves showing them how these fathers can develop their own lives and have a positive impact on the family as a whole. This is also cost effective as it keeps many families out of poverty, prevents children from entering the care system by engaging fathers and the paternal extended family. Hopefully this approach will eventually negate the need for fathers development workers in the future.

"We have the chance to create a sensitive and thoughtful future which the next generation of parents can buy into."

It follows that, if we set an expectation that men should not just be the financial provider or occasional babysitter but should be involved in all aspects of positive parenting, we are making an important statement about equality for all. This includes non-resident fathers. Not only that but, the shifts we are seeing in child care arrangements offer us an opportunity to shape the future of families. If young people see us promoting equality in parenting, it can become the expectation and help shape their views on child care and commitment to their family. We have the chance to create a sensitive and thoughtful future which they, the next generation of parents, can buy into.

As an organisation that works in difficult circumstances with men and boys who are often seen as part of the problem, we have tried to listen to fathers and gather their evidence. Most importantly, our experience and evidence at Working With Men tells us that this change must be facilitated in partnership and co-production with these services as well as fathers themselves and that the statutory services must see why it is important from their point of view as well as ours.

Much of the work we have completed in our longitudinal study, to be published in 2016*, as well as our work with the Department of Work and Pensions has been based on our direct interactions with fathers. We are in a good position to help fathers inform future policy and practice through the All Party Parliamentary Group On Fathers of which we are the secretariat. We are delighted that the author of this report has been represented at this. This year we plan to stand with 30 organisations to launch the Father Development Foundation. We hope the voice of Oxfordshire will be there with us too."

Shane Ryan, CEO Working With Men

*Key recommendations from WWM's 2016 longitudinal study include:

NATIONALLY

A national framework is required to embed a father-inclusive approach into the mainstream services for pregnancy, childbirth and parenting/family support. This framework should:

- Local Authorities to build father-inclusive work into their strategic plans and commit and safeguard the required funding.
- Local Authorities local area needs assessments to include fathers as well as mothers whether living together or apart.
- Data collection by agencies to monitor, target and reach fathers and assess patterns of service use.
- All early years services to have a role in providing support to fathers: involving midwives, health visitors and social workers and include measurable targets.
- All inspection regimes for services linked with early years to examine the achievement of targets of engagement with fathers.
- Training is provided for health and social care agencies on fathers as caregivers and father-inclusive practices.



LOCALLY

Local Authorities set the culture, direction and resources for local services, and the proposed national framework will require them to make changes. But good local authorities can already act. They should:

- Local Authorities to develop and implement a 'fatherhood' policy for all their statutory responsibilities including children in need and child protection which should comprise pathways of referral and assessment to identify fathers in need of support early on.
- Ensure fathers are provided with appropriately focussed and gender-specific information pre and post birth.



CHANGES TO WORKING PRACTICES

Changes to working practices are needed if fathers are to be involved properly and systematically. There are things that services managers and practitioners can do now:

- Engage with mothers and fathers and provide support equally, whether or not the father resides with the family.
- Use gender-differentiated strategies to engage with 'hard to reach' fathers most in need of support.
- Address all aspects of the role of the father, at all stages of the child's development.
- Improve referral and assessment processes to ensure fathers are included and to ensure father's data is collected systematically and accurately.
- Embed father-inclusive practices in agency objectives with targets for engagement with fathers for the organisation and the individual practitioners.
- Include male practitioners in service delivery.
- Develop a clear code of practice for the involvement of fathers and mothers and other caregivers that is understood by all staff and made visible to all families.



3.2 National case study - 1001 Critical Days campaign

1001 CRITICAL DAYS



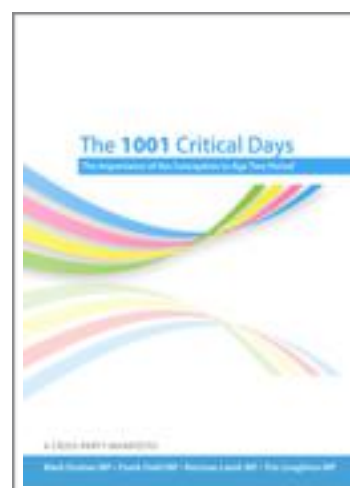
The Fatherhood Institute, the leading UK think tank on Fatherhood, has pledged its support to the current national 1001 Critical Days campaign. This was relaunched in Parliament in 2015 by a cross party group of MP's. It highlights the importance of services intervening early in the 1001 critical days between conception to age 2 to enhance the outcomes for children. The Fatherhood Institute believes this campaign is an opportunity for prenatal and postnatal services to be more father-inclusive in order to support the whole family.

Key findings

- ◆ The UK campaign has cross party support from MP's, UK's Chief Medical Officer and national organisations such as The Fatherhood Institute, NSPCC, Action For Children, OXPIP, The Royal College of Midwives, NCT, FNP and Barnardo's.
- ◆ Research shows that the first 1001 days are critical in a babies brain development and babies are more vulnerable to abuse than older children.
- ◆ Research shows that 85% of fathers are living with their baby's mother at the time of birth and the first two years of the child's life.
- ◆ The campaign recommends that there is greater sharing of data between early years and health services so vulnerable carers do not get missed.
- ◆ The Fatherhood Institute believes services need to offer fathers dad friendly prenatal and postnatal services in order to include the whole family.

UK campaign

In Parliament in December 2015 a cross party group of MP's relaunched 'The 1001 Critical Days' campaign. MPs from eight political parties are supporting the campaign, including Conservative MP Tim Loughton, Labour MP Frank Field, Liberal Democrat MP Norman Lamb and Green MP Caroline Lucas. MP's who support the campaign are pushing for the Government to adopt the policy principles set out in the 1001 Critical Days manifesto. The manifesto highlights the importance of intervening early in the 1001 critical days between conception to age 2 to enhance the outcomes for children.



"As politicians from across the political spectrum, we have come together for the first time to acknowledge the importance of the 1001 critical days from when a baby is conceived until the age of two. This period of life is crucial to increase children's life chances, and we pledge to work to ensure all babies have the best possible start in life. We are missing an opportunity if we don't prevent problems before they arise. It is vital that a focus on the early years is placed at the heart of the policy making process, and in this manifesto we outline why this period of life is so critical, and how we intend to propel our objectives forward."

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- Oxfordshire Midwives do deliver Parent Craft sessions for first time expectant mothers. A first time dad whose partner has had children before is not able to get this support.
- OCC Children's Centres currently offer PEEPLE and Baby Massage sessions for dads with babies at weekend open access sessions. These services will need to be maintained by OCC's new service model in 2017 if it hopes to continue to engage male carers with babies and improve family outcomes.
- OCC does not have definitive data on young fathers in the county.
- Teenage pregnancy strategy groups and the Family Nurse Partnership operate successfully in Oxfordshire. OCC managers need to sign up to the 1001 critical days campaign and develop their data sharing protocol with health organisations in order to identify and engage young fathers, particularly if they separate in the first 2 years.
- If OCC's new service model in 2017 wants to deliver integrated work between early years, health and social services and target vulnerable fathers on C.P plans, it will need to do this at an earlier stage, pre and post birth.
- Evidence based parenting programmes will need to be delivered in a father-inclusive manner if services want to support the whole family with 0-2 year olds.

Pledge of support

The campaign has the backing of senior UK health leaders, including Sally Davies, UK's Chief Medical Officer:



"I am delighted to support this cross party manifesto. This manifesto highlights the importance of acting early to enhance the outcomes for children. The early years of life are a crucial period of change, this is a key moment for brain development. Science is helping us to understand how love and nature by caring adults is hard wired into the brains of children. Those who suffer multiple adverse childhood events achieve less educationally, earn less, and are less healthy. This manifesto is welcome as it seeks to use best practice to guide suggested interventions. I appreciate the emphasis on training of all staff who come into contact with children, young people and their families, in important areas such as attachment. The current economic situation makes early intervention seem challenging. This manifesto recognises that without a focus on prevention and early intervention the costs associated with managing these issues will continue to rise. Acting to improve the first critical 1001 days is a worthy goal. As CMO, I wholeheartedly support the aims of this manifesto because giving children and young people a good start in life should surely be more than just an aspiration!"

The Fatherhood Institute

The Fatherhood Institute has also pledged its support to the 1001 Critical Days campaign. They have produced a briefing for MPs and other interested parties, summarising what the evidence says about fathers' importance in the period from conception to age 2 - and are calling on health professionals, the Government and others to specifically engage fathers and not just through mothers.

"We know that fathers are keen to be involved and the benefits for the couple and the children are huge, so let's make it easy for them, and let's start early,"

Adrienne Burgess, The Fatherhood Institute's joint chief executive



Why is the Conception to Age 2 period so critical?

Pregnancy, birth and the first 24 months can be tough for every mother and father, and some parents may find it hard to provide the care and attention their baby needs. But it can also be a chance to affect great change, as pregnancy and the birth of a baby is a critical 'window of opportunity' when parents are especially receptive to offers of advice and support.

The evidence shows that:

- Ensuring that the brain achieves its optimum development and nurturing during this peak period of growth is vitally important, as the foundations of the babies' mind are being put in place.
- From birth to age 18 months, it has been calculated that connections in the brain are created at a rate of a million per second! The earliest experiences shape a baby's brain development, and have a lifelong impact on that baby's mental and emotional health.
- A pregnant mother suffering from stress can sometimes pass on the message to the unborn baby that the world will be dangerous, so that as a child he or she will struggle with many social and emotional problems. The child's response to experiences of fear or tension have been set to danger and high alert. This will also occur at anytime during the first 1001 days whenever a baby is exposed to overwhelming stress from any cause within the family, such as parental mental illness, maltreatment or exposure to domestic violence.
- International studies show that when a baby's development falls behind the norm during the first years of life, it is more likely to fall even further behind in subsequent years, than to catch up with those that have had a better start.
- Attachment is the name given to the bond a baby makes with its caregiver/s. There is longstanding evidence that a baby's social and emotional development is affected by their attachment to their parents.
- Babies are disproportionately vulnerable to abuse and neglect. In England they are seven times more likely to be killed than older children. Around 26% of babies (198,000) in the UK are estimated to be living within complex family situations, of heightened risk where there are problems such as substance misuse, mental illness or domestic violence. 36% of serious case reviews involve a baby under one.

The best chance to turn this around is during the **1001 critical days**: conception to age two period. At least one loving, sensitive and responsive relationship with an adult caregiver teaches the baby to believe that the world is a good place and reduces the risk of them facing disruptive issues in later life.

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to lead a healthy and fulfilling life, and with the right kind of early intervention, there is every opportunity for secure parent infant relationships to be developed.

Whether out of concern for an individual baby's well-being or safety, or for the costs to society of poor attachment, it is imperative that how children are raised is guided and influenced by this principle and the evidence.

The Fatherhood Institute on fathers' involvement in the first 1001 days

Health and social care professionals should specifically and directly engage with fathers, rather than assuming they will reach them via mothers, during this vital period, because:

1. This is the 'golden opportunity moment' for engagement

During pregnancy, birth and the first two years of babies' lives, most fathers are there:

- Two thirds attend routine antenatal appointments, and more than 9 in 10 are at the scans and the birth (Redshaw & Henderson, 2013).
- 85% are living with their baby's mother at that time; of the 15% living apart, two thirds say they are a couple or 'friends'. Only 5% say they 'aren't in a relationship', but 25% of those dads are still around nine months later (Kiernan & Smith, 2003).
- Only 19% of families accessing Children's Centres in the most deprived areas are single parent families. And among those, 77% of the dads are in contact with their child (Maisey et al, 2013).

Despite fathers' ubiquity, health services' engagement with them is non-mandatory and patchy; inclusion depends on the motivation and skill of individuals (Sherriff & Hall, 2014).

2. Fathers' attitudes and behaviours impact hugely on mothers

- Pregnancy is a key time when both expectant parents review their health behaviours: diet, smoking, drug/alcohol use (Pryor et al, 2014). The greatest influence on a mother's smoking is her partner's smoking: she is most likely to give up if he gives up and/or helps her stop (McBride et al, 2004).
- Expectant and new mothers rely on their partner above anyone else. For example, when depressed they turn to him first, and are more likely to receive support from him than from any other person, including medical staff (Holopainen, 2002).
- Mothers feel more capable and confident about breastfeeding when their partner is supportive (Mannion et al, 2013). Including fathers in breastfeeding education and support improves breastfeeding rates (Maycock et al, 2013)

3. Research shows fathers have an impact on their babies' outcomes

- Fathers' impact on breastfeeding is additionally important because breastfed babies are less likely to be obese later (Armstrong et al, 2002). Toddlers' activity levels are also linked with their father's (but not their mother's) BMI (Sallis et al, 1988).
- High quality (sensitive/supportive) and substantial father involvement from the month following birth are connected with a range of positive outcomes in babies and toddlers, including higher IQs at 12 months and 3 years (Yarrow et al, 1984; Wachs et al, 1971; Yogman et al, 1995; Magill-Evans and Harrison, 1999).
- Disengaged and remote father-child interactions as early as the third month of life have been found to predict behaviour problems in children when they are older (Ramchandani et al., 2013).
- The 'magnitude' of fathers' influences on infant language development is equal to and sometimes larger than those of mothers (Tamis-LeMonda et al, 2013). Later, 'school readiness' in young children is associated with high levels of paternal sensitivity, over and above mothers' (Campbell & von Stauffenberg, 2008).

The Fatherhood Institute's guidance on engaging fathers in services

The Fatherhood Institute has joint worked with many UK organisations to promote father-inclusive practice. They have produced a series of fact sheets with MENCARE and guidance for the Institute of Health Visiting in how to engage with fathers with babies. The following resource explains what agencies such as local authorities need to do to work with fathers generally:

Making the *most* of fathers: Five 'best practice' tips



Men Care
A GLOBAL FATHERHOOD CAMPAIGN

TOP TIP 1

Review policies

> Policies need to specify that 'fathers' (not just 'parents') must be engaged with, and should state why their participation is important. HR policies and staff contracts may need review, to provide flexible working hours (this will help working mothers, too). Recruitment, supervision and appraisal frameworks will need to address engagement with fathers.

TOP TIP 2

Commit resources

> Although engaging with the whole family ultimately saves money, an initial investment is necessary. Resources must be found early on to review policies and program design, ensure premises are 'father-friendly,' re-formulate data collection methods and evaluation frameworks, train staff and allow them more time per case to track down and include fathers and other key family members.

TOP TIP 3

Be systematic

> The only way to ensure engagement with substantial numbers of fathers is for this to be everyone's business. Whenever a child is registered, the names and contact details of their father (whether co-resident or not) and other significant male (as well as female) carers must be sought and recorded. Then the fathers' engagement with the service, and any referrals from it, should be recorded and monitored. Whenever a father is not engaged with or he is not included in a referral, reasons should be requested and recorded.

TOP TIP 4

Understand why it's important

> Researchers, policy makers, practitioners, mothers, father and the wider family need to understand the benefits to the child, of the father accessing a service and/or playing a greater role at home; and the risks to children when fathers and father-figures do not engage or are not engaged with.

TOP TIP 5

Reflect on your own attitudes to, and experiences with, fathers and men – and wider cultural expectations

> We each have our own 'fatherhood stories', and cultural messaging relating to men and fathers is powerful. Research, policy and practice can all be coloured by our personal experiences and assumptions. 'Unpacking' these is crucial so we can be in control of our own responses.

THEY SAID IT:

We take time preparing expectant fathers so they can adopt an active role during the birth. Prenatal classes are available in the evening and on Sunday afternoons (working mothers come then, too – and parking is easier) and we avoid holding classes during prime time sporting fixtures. This systematic engagement with the dads has led to a reduction in the number of women being admitted to hospital in early labour, as they cope confidently at home with their partner's support. This has meant cost savings for the hospital and a lot less work for busy midwives. After the birth, visiting times are now 9am till 9pm and we provide refreshments and an allocated toilet for men.

To download other 'Bringing fathers in' resources and access relevant links and references, go to:
www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2014/bringing-fathers-in-resources-for-advocates-practitioners-and-researchers/

3.3 National case study - Bath and North East Somerset Council

LOCAL AUTHORITY LEADERSHIP



Andrew Sandles was the officer responsible for project managing a year long fathers campaign from 2012-2013 by Bath and North East Council and its Safeguarding Children Board. OPF arranged for Andrew to share the report's findings of the campaign with local practitioners in Oxfordshire. This is a summary of the findings and the learning points that could inform future work by Oxfordshire County Council and its Safeguarding Children Board.

Key findings

- ◆ The B&NES fathers campaign worked because it was initiated, organised and led by its strategic leads within the Council.
- ◆ The campaign worked because its local Safeguarding Board took a proactive approach in championing its delivery.
- ◆ The campaign's success was based on 'embedding' practice within existing services and offering additional services for men.
- ◆ The campaign was driven by the collective aim of services adopting a 'whole family approach'.
- ◆ The council worked with the Fatherhood Institute and academic researchers from the University of Bath.
- ◆ Improved outcomes were recorded in father engagement, work with fathers and SEN, schools engaging fathers and a dads reading project.

Background

This campaign began with one male Assistant Social Worker attending a Local Safeguarding Children Board event in November 2011. He wanted to know how the workforce could support absent fathers in their parenting role.

Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Importance of strategic leadership

From this event Sara Willis, Service Manager 0-11 Outcomes, pledged to run a year-long campaign to promote the importance of fathers in children's lives. This regional year-long campaign (2012-13) developed in partnership with a small multi-agency working group convened and led by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, promoted the importance of fathers in children's lives to family professionals, policy makers, families and the wider local public.



Buy in from the whole council

The campaign flourished through the wide reaching involvement of professionals in the council who bought into and rolled out the campaign. This included local councillors, strategic leads, training officers, senior social workers, service commissioners, Children's centre managers, learning and play practitioners.

B&NES next steps

- The campaign captured data of its male work force figures and found this needs to increase. There are 245 males working directly with children under 11 years in the B&NES local authority out of a workforce of 3,674, representing 6.6%. This includes staff from primary schools, nurseries, pre-schools, children's centres and childminders. The campaign would like these figures to increase to offset an overly feminized workforce that can contribute to fathers feeling excluded from services.
- An example was provided by Rod Dixon - Children Missing Education Officer: *"The majority of my work is with families who live in socially challenging environments and nine times out of ten; I am working directly with mothers who are either single parents or the main carer in the household. However many of the issues that I deal with on a daily basis are often related to the influence of a father's behaviour on their children and the role that they play (or do not play), within the family. I feel that men should be proportionately represented in the children's workforce because many of the children and mothers that I work with, have only had negative experiences with the men in their lives and it is important for them to see that men can be supportive, empathetic and act as positive male role models."*

Delivery of the campaign

Activities included training professionals (via sessions provided by the Fatherhood Institute), a photographic exhibition, a film, a calendar, website, a celebration event, 'Fathers' Fridays' in early years settings and schools, initiatives to engage local media, a review of males in the local early years workforce, a 'lessons learnt' booklet and other strategies. Research, evaluation and support were provided by the University of Bath.

Case Study: Fathers' Fridays

13 schools and 11 Children's Centres and early years settings held events for Fathers' Friday, an initiative aimed at strengthening fathers' participation in children's education and development. Researchers from the University of Bath worked with local schools and families to assess the success of these events in involving fathers (and father-figures) in their children's education and upbringing. Key findings of the research found that the Fathers' Friday initiative increased paternal involvement in children's education and development and is likely to lead to continued participation in such events in the future. On Fathers' Friday most settings organised their recruitment and activities to be led by the children. This kind of communication helped fathers to become familiar with what schools and settings expected from their children.



The initiative strengthened pre-existing relationships with fathers, involved fathers who had not previously been in contact with schools, and increased the range of involvement from fathers and wider family. Fathers still face challenges, particularly from employment and unfamiliarity with schools and childcare settings, which limit their involvement in children's education.

Engagement needs to be cultivated and supported, and will require a variety of approaches and events in order to embed a whole family approach across these services. The report and a film (based on Fathers' Friday at Moorlands school federation) are both accessible from: <http://www.fathersfridayresearch.wordpress.com>

Case Study: Dads in a child protection setting

"The 'K' Family were referred to the Social Care team as the dad expressed concerns that mum was neglecting the girls and the girls were fearful of Mum's new partner. A domestic incident to which police were called led to dad taking the girls to his parents' home and refusing to allow them to return to their mothers care. Social care work helped dad to plan and take over care of the girls when he had secured appropriate housing. The outcome of social care intervention showed that both girls reported being very happy in dad's care. Dad's care of the girls was deemed to be very good. The relationship between dad and the girls was extremely positive and supportive. Their school reports showed that both girls appear very happy and settled in school and the girls no longer come to the attention of senior staff. This challenges the stereotype that assumes the mother is the best main carer."



Trina Shane
Service Manager,
Safeguarding
Outcomes, B&NES
Children Services

Case Study: Engaging the workforce with fathers

"A failure to know about men has been a feature in many serious case reviews where information about men was not passed on or pursued by caseworkers. Workers tended to focus on mothers, who were often seen as the primary carers, and little was known about fathers or other men in the household, their relationships with the mother and the extent to which they were involved with the children. Low levels of engagement are also reported in relation to men who pose a risk to children. In Baynes & Holland's (2010) English study over a third of fathers had no contact with a social worker prior to the first child protection meeting. In Roskill's (2011) file audit of cases involving domestically violent men, the father was neither seen nor contacted by phone in 32% of the core assessments studied. It is also the case that practitioners know very little about, or do not always engage with birth fathers that are not living with their children, or are not visibly present at home visits. All workers should be given opportunities to build their skills and confidence at engaging with fathers and male carers. This can be achieved in a number of ways such as supervision sessions that routinely address issues of engagement and non-engagement with fathers and on-going training events on different aspects of father inclusive services. Bath & N.E Somerset delivered a number of workshops to provide workers with an opportunity to explore issues from the father's perspective."



Simon
Ratcliff
Training and
Development

- 1. Working with fathers:** The first of the Celebrating Fatherhood workshops aimed at educating the workforce on the importance of the role fathers/male carers play in their children's lives was held in May and conducted by Jeszemma Garratt from the Fatherhood Institute.
- 2. Engaging fathers in play:** Led by Michael Follett, trainer who has extensive play work experience. This workshop aimed to give an understanding of playwork and to create an understanding of the father's experience.
- 3. Men, masculinity and messiness:** Led by Daryl Dugdale, Teaching Fellow at the University of Bristol and addressed the strengths and challenges of engaging with fathers in the child protection context.
- 4. Working with fathers and domestic violence:** This workshop considered how to engage fathers in our work to address issues of domestic abuse and the effect of this on children. It focused on how to include and motivate fathers, what has worked well and some of the difficulties encountered.

Celebrating Fatherhood outcomes

Results have been astounding: for example, the number of fathers using services in local Children's Centres more than doubled (from 1666 in 201/12 to 3772 in 2012/13) and dads attending Fathers' Fridays over the same period rose from 200 to 1122. The percentage of fathers attending Special Educational Needs statement meetings rose from 2% to 25%. Local media coverage with fathers as the focus rose from 'none' to 19.



List of improvements from 2012-2013:

Number of fathers and male carers reached by campaign from 0 to 1642

Numbers of fathers using services in Children's Centres from 1666 to 3772

Dual heritage fathers involvement in services from 283 to 475

Fathers enjoying their children's learning (Fathers' Friday) from 200 to 1122

Percent of fathers involved in parenting programmes (Incredible Years, Strengthening Families & Strengthening Communities) from 24% to 26%

Number of fathers using Parent Support Advisers through targeted schools from 'not in post' to 36

Percent of fathers attending Special Educational Needs statement meetings from 2% to 25%

Per cent of fathers attending Child Protection conferences from 37% to 42%

Number of expectant fathers present at the antenatal visits by Family Nurse Partnership from 'not in post' to 59%

Number of events delivered for fathers/male carers from 5 to 79

Number of training courses with father's focus delivered to professionals from 0 to 6

Workers attending training programmes with a focus on fathers from 0 to 101

Number of media coverage with fathers as the focus from 0 to 19



Comments from male carers and professionals involved

"why haven't you ever done anything like this before?"

"it makes such a difference to be asked to something just for me as a Dad"

"it's been good having other men here to talk to"

"I need to challenge my thinking about how I involve the absent dad more, when I visit the home".

Concluding event

A concluding event was held to celebrate the success of the campaign which was attended by all those who had been involved including local councillors, strategic leads in the council and the Children's Safeguarding Board. A series of case studies were presented to highlight the tangible differences made and Duncan Fisher OBE (co-founder of the Fatherhood Institute) delivered the keynote speech outlining the main obstacles fathers and male carers still faced.

A Legacy - Book bugs project

"One of the projects we hope will grow and develop beyond this campaign is Book Bugs which links male volunteers with primary schools and nurseries to encourage and help 3-5 year-old boys enjoy books and reading. We have recruited 8 male volunteers in the Paulton and Radstock area for our pilot. These volunteers are undergoing a number of training sessions to prepare them for engaging boys in books. The pilot aims to make a difference to the boys reading levels which research shows is lagging behind the girls levels."



Jane Southwell
Early Years Consultant

Learning shared with Oxfordshire stakeholders

Oxfordshire Parenting Forum contacted Andrew Sandles, the project manager of the 'Celebrating Fatherhood' campaign, and invited him to deliver a presentation of the findings of his report to stakeholders working with men in Oxfordshire. He agreed to be a key note speaker at OPF's 2015 seminar, 'Future-proofing fathers work'. The presentation was attended by around 50 practitioners, including Children's Centre managers, an OCC Early Years Area manager, social workers, Play Association managers, Dads workers, Family Group conference workers, parenting programme leads, Oxford Brookes University researcher and a leading UK practitioner in father-inclusive practice. Andrew Sandles' powerpoint gave him an opportunity to reflect back on Bath & N.E Somerset Council's father-inclusive campaign and achievements:



Bath & North East Somerset Council

How we did it

- » Multi-agency approach
- » Variety of projects
- » Supporting the workforce
- » Research
- » Communicating with the sector

Bath and North East Somerset – The place to live, work and visit



Bath & North East Somerset Council

Our Legacy

- » Outcomes
- » Reading programme - Book Bugs
- » Embedding in strategies

Bath and North East Somerset – The place to live, work and visit



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Lessons Learnt

- » Drop off
- » Innovate
- » Cultural shift
- » Embed not separate
- » Professionals are key
- » Revisit

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The Future

- » Embedding in Service plans
- » Training & Education
- » Book Bugs
- » Still challenges

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OPF's Fathers' Champions Network response to B&NES strategic campaign with fathers

Seminar delegates and members of OPF Fathers' Champions Network group were impressed by the level of outcomes achieved for fathers and their families by a comparative local authority. They were impressed by senior managers' commitment to championing fathers work, demonstrated by their strategic leadership and commissioning of training. They were impressed by the joint work between agencies such as social care, FNP and local schools to embed this practice and the leadership of its Safeguarding Board to make this happen. Practitioners believe there are similar opportunities available for services in Oxfordshire should they want to replicate the successful work of Bath & N.East Somerset Council and work more effectively with fathers. In particular, OCC strategic leads, the Children's partnership of the Children's Trust and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, social care and health managers could champion father-inclusive practice if they were to consider:

- Commission specialists in father-inclusive practice such as the Fatherhood Institute in order to increase the number of training courses with father's focus delivered to professionals and the numbers of workers attending training programmes with a focus on fathers.
- Promoting a whole family approach by embedding father-inclusive practice into its new service model in 2017.
- Working with academics from Oxford Brookes University whose research involves Fatherhood and attend their annual ONEFAR conference in order to develop this work locally.
- Measuring how many expectant fathers are present at antenatal visits and demonstrate annual increases.
- Measuring the number of fathers using early years services in OCC's new service model in 2017 and demonstrate annual increases.
- Measuring the number of fathers involved in parenting programmes and demonstrate any annual increases through the use of evidence based programmes being delivered in a father-inclusive manner.
- Measuring the percent of male carers attending Child Protection conferences, TAC's and CAF's and any annual increases.
- Measuring the percent of fathers attending Special Educational Needs statement meetings and any annual increases.
- Working with schools to increase father-child reading and learning with the promotion of regular dads reading events.
- Increasing the number of media coverage with fathers as the focus in order to promote the reputation of the local authority for having outstanding inclusive and safeguarding practice.

Note - Following Andrew Sandles presentation in Oxfordshire in November 2015, the author of this report met with OCC strategic leads in January 2016 and shared the work with fathers achieved by this comparative local authority. OCC strategic leads stated they were committed to delivering a whole family approach in its new service model, to be introduced in 2017. They stated their commitment to examine the national and local case studies in this report and consider its findings and recommendations into future-proofing fathers work in Oxfordshire.

SAFEGUARDING



Dr Gavin Swann is Head of service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance employed with social care and family support in Croydon. Gavin's doctorate, 'Including Fathers within Children's Social Care' outlines the changes needed to support male carers and safeguard children. This is a summary of his research and guide to practitioners. OPF believes this is useful tool for local services wanting to engage fathers and safeguard children.

Key findings

- ◆ UK research shows institutionalised barriers stop effective father-inclusive practice in social care.
- ◆ Excluding fathers is a safeguarding issue.
- ◆ Research by Gavin Swann shows that barriers can be reduced by examining the subjectivities of staff.
- ◆ Practical changes need to be supported by managers, strategic leads and local Safeguarding Boards.
- ◆ A guide has been produced to help social workers and other local authorities deliver father-inclusive practice.
- ◆ Research by UK's Working With Men will include a cost analysis of Gavin Swann's work.
- ◆ Oxfordshire may want to use similar inclusive practices in social care.

Background

Gavin Swann became a qualified social worker since 1998. He first became interested in working with fathers when he recognised that he held prejudicial views of men as valueless, as violent and as absent. Academic study has allowed him to unpick these stereotypes. He has developed a methodology to support social workers, managers and statutory organisations to involve fathers in social work assessments and interventions. As a senior manager he has been in a position to champion change across a local authority. He has looked at the way front line staff subjectivities can influence their ability to include and exclude male carers from the child welfare system.

Research

In order to identify and reduce institutionalised barriers against fathers within social care practice, Gavin undertook a piece of research with a group of social work practitioners. They experimented with different techniques and practices in their work-place in an attempt to include fathers. The research took place over a thirty-six month period in a local authority Children's Service in London. The research was supported by senior managers within Children social care and by the local Safeguarding Children Board. The research asked why and how fathers have been excluded from children and family social work. The research further asked what strategies, methods, conditions and techniques promote inclusive practice for fathers whilst examining the role of 'the self' as a researcher, practitioner and participant. The research strategy was based on the participation of practitioners in a co-operative inquiry supported by 'a before and after' case file audit designed to test whether the methodology of action research, which operated within a 'front-line' child protection service, brought about practice change.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- The success of this work relies on an experienced senior social worker who is able to champion the need for father-inclusive practice and earn support from the council they work for.
- Senior managers within Oxfordshire social care may need to be identified who can champion similar institutional changes called for by Dr Gavin Swann.
- As part of OCCs obligation to safeguard children, senior managers in social care may want to reflect on research that demonstrates more effective father-inclusive practice increases safeguarding of children.
- The Family Rights Group have been commissioned by local authorities to help social care practice with fathers. OCC social care may want to commission externally to examine institutional barriers that fathers face.
- Oxfordshire social care may want to produce a cost analysis before it makes changes to its practices with fathers in order to safeguard children. This may involve commissioning additional training at a time when Oxfordshire social care has a large overspend and OCC has undergone recent budget cuts.
- OSCB may want to scrutinise father-inclusive practice through its learning and improvement framework which can be fed into the learning of the child protection partnership.

Aims of the research

The aims of the research were; to design and implement a co-operative inquiry, instigate a range of inclusive targets to support the implementation of a father inclusive strategy across the whole system.

Findings of the research

The research concluded that children and family social work is one of the few institutions to confront the perversities and abuses of traditional gender and power relations and this confrontation has led to 'paternal alienation'. Services can include fathers if there is 'a whole system and a participative approach' which identifies how covert power and gender relations influence behaviour in practice. To achieve greater father inclusion social workers' anxieties need to be contained through safety planning systems and quality reflective supervision. For fathers to be included senior managers must support the activity in the long term, (ten to fifteen years), collect data and set targets whilst strategically committing and realigning resources to meaningfully address domestic abuse. Organisational change is possible if the conditions to foster emergence are in place, if the culture that operates in the organisation supports emergent creativity whilst espousing staff cohesion simultaneously championing social worker empowerment. This research adds to knowledge in the areas of; father inclusion, risk assessment in child protection, domestic abuse, management, gender and power relations, leadership, group work, participation and collaboration in achieving organisational change.

Gains from the research

The work of this action research project led to:

- An increase in fathers identified and assessed.
- An increase in fathers attending meetings and reviews.
- An increase in fathers recorded as having parental responsibility.
- An increase in contact arrangements for fathers.
- A sizeable increase in social workers' considering the father's situation in ongoing planning for the child.

Next steps

This initial research project is now being repeated in Croydon in order to complete a rigorous cost-analysis and

will focus its resource and attention on Family Group Conferences, Pre-birth CPC's and ICPC's of under 2's, Pre-PLO and Legal Planning meetings and removal at point of police protection. Resources will be allocated to identify and work with father/paternal extended family to attempt to divert children from care.



Working With Men are funding the 16 month project. This will be evaluated by Brid Featherstone who worked previously on the Fathers Matter projects with other local authority social services. A 7 point strategy will be produced to engage fathers and be embedded into practice with strategic leadership from the Safeguarding Children's Board and from across the council. Gavin continues to share his finding at UK conferences and at the House of Commons APPG on Fatherhood. These findings also form a practical guide for local authority workforces.

A practical guide for social care

Gavin produced a good practice guide to help social workers develop strategies, methods and techniques which promote inclusive practice for men, called '*Developing an approach to include fathers in children's social care*'. He examined research into fatherhood and 57 case studies where fathers have been included by practitioners and managers. This excerpt is reproduced with the kind permission of Dr Gavin Swann:



It is important that practitioners are capable of working with men:

- ❖ The self-perception of manliness and fatherhood are deeply rooted and interrelated. In all cultures, being a man is constructed with longstanding and powerful meaning and these meanings vary across cultures, ethnicities and class. As a practitioner you need to understand masculinity and contemporary fatherhood if you are to accurately assess fathers and family dynamics.
- ❖ Social workers must be aware of the insidious and endemic nature of power and gender relations and how this affects their practice and how it impacts on children and vulnerable women, and other marginalised groups.
- ❖ Social workers should be prepared to work with men and support them to be better parents by assisting them with their parenting skills or supporting them address addictions, illness or violence.
- ❖ Practitioners should recognise the value of fathers to children. Practitioners should commit to the empowerment of marginalised fathers, (in terms of them becoming better partners and parents).
- ❖ Be aware of your own assumptions, prejudices and personal biography that may influence your view of fathers. (Consider how your experience of your own father / partner influences your practice).
- ❖ Be empathetic to fathers. This is not easy when working with abusers but remember he is far more threatened than you.
- ❖ Be respectful. Respect has a particular relevance for men. This is evident through popular culture about respect and disrespect in the masculine worlds. If social workers communicate respect throughout their interventions then they are more likely to engage the father and keep him involved in their intervention.
- ❖ Consistency; Practitioners need to be consistent in what they say, in the information they provide and in their authenticity and in the way they treat fathers.
- ❖ Value and understand the importance of fathers to case planning and involve them, (where safe), in every aspect of case management from assessment to closure.
- ❖ Be prepared to understand the issues that uniquely effect fathers. For example: non-residential, Black, ethnic minority and white working class fathers all have unique circumstances and pressures that need to be understood and assessed.
- ❖ Practitioners must commit to involving the father and the paternal extended family from the earliest possible opportunity in the assessment.
- ❖ Family Group Conferences need to be used as early as possible within the assessment stage.
- ❖ Practitioners need to be flexible and willing to engaging violent/abusive men.
- ❖ Practitioners need to know the law in relation to fathers and paternal responsibility.
- ❖ Social workers should be expected to demonstrate 'due diligence' in their efforts to locate the father and this should become a practice expectation.

- ❖ Fathers are expected to be on time and therefore so should social workers.
- ❖ Do not minimise domestic violence. Always investigate the father's involvement in cases of child maltreatment.
- ❖ Recognise that many fathers are vulnerable and will either withdraw or be threatening as a form of defence. Remember, fathers may be abusive but research indicates that 90% of children regularly see their fathers, (following separation), and most children want to maintain a relationship with their fathers, even if they are abusive. In referred cases it is likely that the child is having contact with the father, (if non-resident).

The identification of male carers is vital to working with male carers:

- Exhaust all options to locate fathers. Be curious, creative and persistent; make time to investigate (even if there are multiple fathers as any of them could be a risk and resource).
- Contact the GP, (research indicates that if men have a problem they are most likely to tell their GP, research also indicates men use the same GPs as their partners and rarely change their GP).
- Speak to the professional network surrounding the child. Does the school, children centre, health visitor, mid wife, maternity unit, local community police officer, hospital know the father's name?
- Ask the maternal and paternal extended families. Locate a copy of the birth certificate. Use Facebook. Undertake local authority and police checks. Undertake Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Inland Revenue checks.
- Contact the Child Support Agency. Contact the Child Maintenance Information Commission who oversees the CSA. Contact the local Authority Community Charge Team. Complete a local authority search.
- Ensure accurate information is requested and recorded on the case files, (i.e. the correct telephone numbers and addresses for the father and paternal extended family).
- Always identify whether a man is living (or visiting) the family home. Check the basics, are there a man's clothes in the home etc.
- Mothers will often 'gate-keep' the father's identity. (Research evidences this occurs in 66% of all cases). Ask at every meeting and challenge her non-compliance and explain the benefits of contact with the father. US research suggests that social workers should recruit fathers through mothers, to focus on a strengths-based empowerment model of intervention that includes a range of parental support programmes.

The methods of interacting with male carers are important:

- ★ Address fathers by name. Correspondence needs to be sent to the father and mother separately and needs to be addressed directly to the parent using their name (not simply saying Dear Parent but Mr Smith or Mr Johnson), as research evidences men respond to individual attention.
- ★ Engage him as early as possible in the social work intervention.
- ★ Assess his role, how he views the maltreatment, his role, his opinion and what he could have done to prevent the maltreatment, his role models, his views of discipline, his aggression and anger and his controlling or manipulative behaviour. Also the relationship between the father and mother and any involvement from other men in the children's and mother's life need to be included as part of the assessment.
- ★ Be prepared to build a relationship based on trust.
- ★ Use a strengths based approach; men respond well to praise.
- ★ Managing the complications of parental conflict, especially financial related conflicts can be extremely problematic for practitioners and will often prevent mothers and fathers from working together in the interests of children. (If the non-residential father is involved in the child's life he is more likely to contribute financially).
- ★ Always visit prison when fathers are incarcerated.

- ★ Where it is safe for the woman, interview parents together, (although giving both parents the opportunity to be seen alone during the intervention).
- ★ Discuss the emotional needs of the child.
- ★ Give parental tips to fathers. Discuss discipline and boundaries: every father needs to understand and learn strategies for managing his child's behaviour and managing the father's anger. The social worker's role is to offer the father guidance on discipline as well as assist him understand the roots of his anger and establish an agreement over what is acceptable discipline. i.e. the salient themes to a positive strategy for discipline and boundaries are: Adopt a high praise, high warmth and low criticism parenting style. Establish clear rules and administer them consistently. Do not acquiesce to a tantrum. Refrain from using anger when setting or administering boundaries. Do not complicate or mistake bad behaviour with a bad child. Use time outs. Coalesce rules, boundaries and limit setting with explanations.

Workers need to adapt their practice to different types of fathers in different situations:

- * In terms of working with fathers from Black and ethnic minority cultures then social workers must be culturally curious and talk with the father about what it means to be a father from his cultural perspective. What is the father's role, what are his responsibilities, what additional stressors exist (i.e. racism, poverty and marginalisation), how would he define fatherhood from his specific perspective?
- * Practitioners need to consider how they will adapt their practice, as they need a variety of engagement formats to engage with; married fathers, co-habiting fathers, young fathers, non-residential fathers, imprisoned fathers, no recourse to public funds fathers or fathers with no immigration status, multiple fathers, boyfriends and step-fathers.
- * Fathers need to be clear about expectations, roles and communication between the social worker and him. Be honest. Be flexible in terms of home visit times.
- * Provide the father with observations and feedback particularly positives and areas of development.
- * Develop the quality of the working relationship with the father. Provide fathers with an opportunity to tell their story.
- * Understand masculinity to enhance your practice for example; many men like technology and to communicate by email or texting additionally men respond well to structure i.e. a clear CIN or CP plan.
- * The father needs to know, (if he is worried for the welfare of his children), that the social worker can be an ally to monitor the welfare of the children.
- * Likewise; be honest with the mother about the father's involvement in the social work intervention.
- * Take into account when the father lives and the distance he has to travel when inviting him to meetings or child protection conferences.
- * Remember 50% of fathers who are in contact with Children Social Care are non-residential and a further 50% are in employment. Work is crucial to masculine identity and so this needs to be respected. Social workers need to schedule around fathers' work commitments.
- * Often non-residential fathers will have other children. It is important to be aware of how practically, emotionally and financially difficult it is to manage more than one family and when we consider triangulation it is inevitable that one of the families will suffer.

Strategies to consider when assessing non-residential fathers:

- Assess the type of relationship the child has with the non-residential father.
- His current living and contact arrangements.
- Assess how the non-residential father fits within the family system (because he has an important impact on the family dynamics).
- Assess and understand the role the non-residential father plays in contributing to the maltreatment of the child or in helping to protect the child, (he may offer a suitable placement and offset the maltreatment).
- Is there another man living in the house?

Working with abusive men:

- ❖ Ensure there is a safety plan for the child, mother and social worker before engaging the abuser.
- ❖ Assessments need to deconstruct the risks, causes and complications surrounding the violence and must pay attention to the stressors in the family. (See the Barnardos Risk Assessment Matrix or CAADA). This will include past/recent physical violence, past use of weapons against women/partners, use of firearms, sexual violence, threats of murder, extreme jealousy and controlling behaviours.
- ❖ The assessment must include how the violence impacts on all those involved.
- ❖ Name violence to women as unacceptable and must stop.
- ❖ Provide individual and group interventions which pay attention to parenting.
- ❖ Respect men who want to change.
- ❖ Fathers need to be informed of the impact of their violence on their child's development.
- ❖ Fathers should be involved in the child protection process. (They should be offered an appointment to meet with the chair of the conference before and after the conference).

- ❖ Social workers need to recognise the difficulties and barriers to survivors of domestic violence accessing services and plan responses accordingly.
- ❖ Fathers' abuse of their children must be addressed. Be honest about the problem and identify actions that need to be taken to prevent further maltreatment. Abusive parents must acknowledge their abuse. They must then apologise to their child as this benefits children's recovery.
- ❖ Social workers should be supported, (through supervision, rigorous local authority procedures, training and safety planning), so they are not disempowered by violent men. Social workers need to be supported to engage despite the complexities of the power and gender relationships which must be taken into account by employing organisations.
- ❖ Abusive men can be controlling and manipulative and so they will often display these behaviours through as a sense of entitlement and narcissism. Confronting these behaviours must be the priority of any social work intervention.
- ❖ *'Maltreating fathers typically do not seek intervention voluntarily, nor are they intrinsically motivated to change their parenting style'*. In response, social workers need a clear framework and tight boundaries to guide their interventions to engage abusers. These boundaries may include:
- ❖ Application of a risk assessment (CAADA or Barnardos Risk Assessment Matrix). Joint work with the Criminal Courts and Probation Services; (in terms of injunctions, community orders, IDAP and Caring Dads). Joint work with the family courts, (in private proceedings), in relation to s.7 reports, injunctions, contact orders and Prohibitive Steps Orders. Application of the MARAC and MAPPA processes. Joint works with the voluntary sector to support survivors escape the violence and maintain separation. Joint work with the Police's Community Safety team and the Child Abuse Investigation Teams in the identification and protection of survivors and in the arrest and conviction of abusers. Application of the Child in Need process, Child Protection Procedures, Child Protection Plan. Application of the Public Law Outline (PLO). Application of s.31 Care Proceedings.

Social workers need the following training in relation to working with fathers:

- Exploring local, national and international research on fatherhood.
- Identifying fathers, obstacles to engaging fathers who are deemed a risk – engaging with reluctance and the reasons for it, talking with fathers about risk, dealing with denial and developing a dialogue about their violence: (there also needs to be a segment on masculinity i.e. understanding masculinity and male behaviours).
- Assessing and managing his risk.
- Case analysis; group exploration of a case and taking stock.

- Social workers own assumptions and prejudices in working with men (including personal and organisational defences). Additionally what can social workers expect from supervision in working with men?
- Domestic violence; particularly working with perpetrators and the training in the Barnardos Risk Assessment Matrix and CAADA.
- Social workers need to be confident to be able to work with the couple relationships if parents remain together. Where there is separation and conflict, (for example in the process of a s.7 report), social workers need the skills to work with both parents. They need to be given the techniques to navigate the often conflictual adults' relationships to remain focused on the child. Therefore; training in family therapy techniques would clearly benefit social workers and managers.

Managers will be required to:

- Adopt and implement aims to include fathers.
- Adopt and commit to a paternal pledge.
- Challenge the silence and lead discussions in your organisations about how to work with abusive men.
- Commit strategically and long term to the engagement of fathers in terms of partnering and parenting.
- Value and understand the importance of fathers to the service provision process.
- Involve the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and include it in their strategic long term plans.
- Regularly audit to ensure fathers involvement is improving.
- Regularly and repeatedly ask social workers about fathers as this will encourage staff and they are aware of what is expected of them.
- Managers need to enforce, (through job descriptions, person specifications and appraisal targets), that social workers are expected to demonstrate 'due diligence' in their efforts to locate the father. This should become a practice expectation.
- The organisation, facilitation and management of contact needs to be improved through discussion in social work team meetings and possibly additional training.
- Managers need to initiate and institutionalise Safety Planning throughout their social work structure.
- Managers need to provide containing, safe and sophisticated supervision to enable practitioners to disclose their feelings and fears and how this impacts on their ability to engage fathers.

FATHERS PRACTITIONER



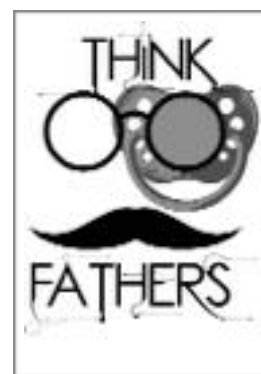
Seany O'Kane is a multi-award winning practitioner, public speaker and recognised figure within the field of Fatherhood work in the UK. In 2015 he was the key note speaker for OPF's seminar 'Future proofing fathers work'. This is a summary of the work he has achieved with fathers in the UK. It includes an interview with Seany about the steps needed to embed fathers work nationally and more locally in Oxfordshire.

Key findings

- ◆ **Fathers practitioners help organisations to deliver father-inclusive practice and develop a whole family approach.**
- ◆ **St.Michael's successfully engage young fathers because they employ dads workers and offer male carers a board range of practical and emotional interventions.**
- ◆ **As local authority funding for fathers work has decreased, this has led to dads work being delivered by social enterprises, the charity and voluntary sectors.**
- ◆ **Similar national practices in fathers work developed by Think Fathers have been delivered by Dads workers in Oxfordshire.**
- ◆ **There is an opportunity to use national practitioners experienced in work with young fathers work, such as Think Fathers, to enable OCC leads to embed a whole family approach.**

Background

With over 13 years of grassroots experience, Seany dedicates his time to achieving sustainable outcomes for young fathers and their families. As the founding member of 'Lambeth Dads', he continues to create ground-breaking methods in father-inclusive practice that help to contribute to services excelling in father/family engagement. As recognition for his outstanding practice with young fathers, Seany was awarded in 2009 the national 'Dads Included Award' from the UK's think-tank The Fatherhood Institute. In 2010 he received the NCT's National Maternity Awards for 'Tailoring Services to meet the needs of Fathers' for his work in enabling new and expectant fathers to play an active role in the family. In 2013 he received the Heart Award for outstanding contribution to Fatherhood and in 2015 he received the UK Change Maker Recognition award. Seany is a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood and active public speaker. His research and literature has contributed to a growing interest in British empirical evidence focusing on the lives of young fathers.



Think Fathers

Seany is the founder and CEO of 'Think Fathers'. This offers effective practical assistance to fathers and helps to strengthen relations between health and social care professionals and the dads they come into contact with during pregnancy, post birth and beyond. Training is provided to health and social care students at University level around the importance of overall father engagement.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- The local authority budget for family services, including fathers work has been cut locally. Can fathers work continue to be provided in the new service model?
- The Spurgeons report recommended that Oxfordshire should engage young fathers into "core programmes widely and regularly run in Hubs and Children's Centres; identify and train staff to deliver them." By 2016, this service model was impractical due to ongoing decisions about the future of these services. Can this report's proposals be applied to OCC new service model in 2017?
- The Family Nurse Partnership in Oxfordshire successfully engages young fathers. Work with young fathers has not yet been embedded into early years services. How can FNP, Health services and OCC's new service model become integrated so young fathers access post natal services?
- Young fathers who separate from their partners quickly disappear from local services. Can OCC's new service model integrate social care, health, youth offending and early years services to identify young male carers and safeguard children?
- Would OCC be willing to commission external national expertise such as Think Fathers to bring about a cultural shift so that institutional barriers towards fathers are overcome?

'Think Fathers' helps to highlight social issues that impact negatively upon communities by using specialist tool-kits designed in partnership with young people in Lambeth and owned and commissioned by St. Michael's Fellowship. The resources explore subject matters such as gang violence, domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy, co-parenting and young fatherhood.

St. Michael's Fellowship

Seany has been a Young Fathers Practitioner at St. Michael's Fellowship since 2008. This work specialises in bettering the lives of young fathers and their families and reconnecting some of Britain's most marginalised dads back into the lives of their children. The centre offers young fathers free advice and support including parenting, relationships, benefits, housing, finding work, confidence building, pregnancy, education and training, finding childcare, sexual health, substance misuse, literacy, the 'Caring Dads' domestic violence programme, welcoming supervised contact spaces for separated fathers and mediation services. In his role, Seany:



- Advocates for families who face a variety of complex issues that hinder their ability to parent effectively.

- Is responsible for the design and delivery of tailored workshops to improve relations between young men and their partners/co-parents.



- Is responsible for design and delivery of expectant fathers parenting classes to help equip young fathers with the skills and knowledge in relation to pregnancy and their roles and expectations in preparation for fatherhood.
- Co-ordinates a horticultural gardening project that encourages fathers to help bond with their children through nature.
- Co-ordinates relations and strategic clinical partnerships between maternity operations and fatherhood services.
- Contribute to development of Children and Young Peoples services to ensure overall father-inclusiveness.
- Mentors and coaches a peer advisory group of young fathers to reduce levels of poverty and isolation.
- Created the annual London event 'The 100 Dads Walk'

Key note speech at OPF's fathers seminar, 2015

Seany was invited to be the key note speaker at Oxfordshire Parenting Forum's seminar 'Future-proofing fathers work' which was held in Oxfordshire in November 2015. Seany's inspirational presentation provided an opportunity for around 50 delegates, including local practitioners, stakeholders, centre managers and academics to reflect on best practice with fathers. Seany took part in a Q & A session for delegates to consider the next steps needed to embed fathers work Oxfordshire. This discussion focussed on the proposed closures of all of Oxfordshire's 44 Children's centres and what impact this would have on the championing of local fathers work and how fathers work can continue with the introduction of a referral only service model.

"Outstanding seminar. Very proud to be part of the day. Well done."
Seany O'Kane



Seany O'Kane at
OPF's seminar 2015

OPF's interview with Seany O'Kane, 2016

Following the seminar, Seany completed an interview with OPF on how to engage fathers. This is reproduced with the kind permission of Seany O'Kane.

OPF: Are young fathers hard to reach?

Seany: *The one thing that has resonated with me the most during the entire time as a fathers practitioner is that these young men are not 'hard-to-reach', in fact on the contrary. I've come to realise that in reality these young men are visible, that they have voices and that it's them who find services to engage with hard-to-reach and extremely intricate to access. Fathers themselves have reported to me that their needs as service users often go unacknowledged.*

OPF: What challenges do young fathers face?

Seany: *Young men I have assisted have all faced a variety of relational, socio-economic and environmental challenges that have constrained their abilities to gain a foothold as parents. In most cases, they have each had fewer material or financial resources to contribute to parenting. Their youth often led to negative perceptions of their capacity to be responsible and trustworthy, to sustain positive adult relationships, or to take a direct caring role. In policy and practice circles such evidence has fed into a widespread view that early parenthood is a social ill that needs to be prevented or, at the least, its worst effects ameliorated. As part of this perception, the notion of 'feckless' young fathers, who are assumed to be disinterested in 'being there' or, worse, regarded as a potential risk to their children, continues to hold sway, particularly in popular, media and some political discourses. What I have found particularly damaging is the belief that some young fathers have actually bought into this prejudiced notion that they are not worthy of being responsible for caring and loving their own children. As a result these young men are rarely perceived as a resource for appropriate parenting, and there is little emphasis on how the entry into parenthood may affect their own life chances or be of benefit to the young men themselves.*



OPF: Is having a 'whole family approach' the solution to engaging with fathers?

Seany: *Gradually, St. Michael's came to understand that to be successful they needed to shift their focus of support. Pressure was growing from local authorities to get charities nation-wide to do more to consider all aspects of family-inclusion. St. Michael's Fellowship decided to expand its support service resulting in new initiatives designed to assist young mums and dads as couples,*

single parents and co-parents. For too long fathers, particularly those who form part of child protection plans, have been deemed 'the problem' by local authorities. What is slowly being realised by practitioners working within children and young peoples services, is that by including the father, involving him, asking him questions, inviting him to meetings etc., he can actually be 'the solution' to the presenting matter, even if his actions are what caused the CP plan to be initiated in the first place.

**"Think Fathers'
offers soul-level, as well as
extremely effective practical-level
assistance to fathers."**

OPF: What stops effective work with young dads by practitioners?

Seany: Effective provision is likely to be hampered where practitioners do not see them as clients of their services and fail to routinely collect information about them. They may have little knowledge of their lives, and lack strategies and the confidence to engage with them. I learned that being persistent but polite was a necessary requirement to overall successful father-inclusive engagement. Adopting a non-threatening approach was key. It wouldn't be uncommon for the clients to express their distrust of professionals and indeed distaste towards authority figures.

OPF: How do you best support young fathers with multiple needs?

Seany: The most important factor in working with young fathers is to tackle the presenting problems first, the ones that hinder their ability to parent effectively. For example; if a father has been identified as someone who wants to reinstate contact with his children but does not have a fixed abode, then the matter for housing should take precedent. If the attention revolves around the man 'just being a dad' with no consideration given to his circumstances, lifestyle, mental health, understanding of his roles and responsibilities, his availability etc., then what is likely to happen, is that the father will be set up to fail by the very service or organisation in place to support him. What I have witnessed in the above example is that when contact happens, dad realises that he has nowhere to take his children, he becomes overwhelmed with the pressures of managing parenting with no roof over his head. To prevent situations like this from occurring in Lambeth as a whole, I helped to design two detailed resources: an assessment of needs and a father-inclusive audit. Their aim was to assist practitioners in asking clients the right sorts of questions so they can get a real understanding of the issues impacting upon their lives as men, fathers and individuals. This reasoning was because no two fathers' circumstances are the same.

OPF: Do practitioners need to use creative approaches to be effective with men?

Seany: Discussions I have had with practitioners working with fathers over the years have demonstrated the need for creative thinking, most notably when the vision of the practitioner is not one that's shared amongst management and more frustratingly the commissioners of fathers' work. The best results I have achieved have come using totally original ideas that fit with the lifestyles of the clients themselves. Nationally, it is difficult to gauge how far a supportive and creative approach has been adopted across health, social care and other mainstream agencies. I have worked with young men across London who have expressed supportive encounters with a range of mainstream services, including health care visiting, probation, maternity care, and children's centres. However, such creative encounters have been piecemeal. As an external colleague of mine once exclaimed: 'you see some individual children's centres or individual outreach workers who've really taken the needs of young fathers on board, but, you know, if we're to look nationally, then they're few and far between.' Currently, the approach seems to be driven by 'local champions' for young fathers, practitioners residing on the margins of statutory provision or in the voluntary sector, who are pioneering new ways to develop their services for young fathers, and are prepared to 'go the extra mile', to meet their needs. A strategy I used that became popular for encouraging attendance at one of my parenting groups was to



ditch the organisations idea of a 'coffee and chat dad time' in exchange for a 'Fry-up Thursday'. In the space of two weeks, numbers shifted from a few dads in attendance to having to extend the session so we could accommodate the extra members. It certainly pays to be creative when working with men of all ages, but the bigger payoff is when management and commissioners support the practitioners creative thinking of father-inclusiveness.

OPF: What was the thinking behind organising the annual 100 Dads Walk?

Seany: *I got together a stronghold of fathers and we shared some marvellous and endearing stories and accounts of when they had each felt their 'rights of passage' moments into fatherhood. For some of the men, they had never even held a baby before becoming fathers themselves, and then they found themselves pushing their own child in a buggy down the street. Several men expressed feeling both daunted and excited by it. We agreed that men walking with their children; that feeling of immense pride, as a father and protector, was a powerful message to convey in our quest as a symbolism of fatherhood. Subsequently, during this same period there were a few newspaper articles about feckless and absent fathers. We thought about doing something to dispel this myth, as one young father exclaimed at the time: 'why don't we put together an event that demonstrates fathers walking into the lives of their children, not walking away from them?' The '100 Dads Walk' was born. We had more than a 100 Dads and families in attendance.*



"why don't we put together an event that demonstrates fathers walking into the lives of their children, not walking away from them?"

OPF: Have you had to move away from depending on local authority funding?

Seany: *Sadly, gone are the days of generous local authority funding for fathers work. The current government's agenda does not reflect the need to engage fathers. I have seen how funding gradually has been reduced year by year, dramatically impacting upon the delivery structure. Despite this, the quality of the work has been expected to remain unchanged. These financial strains have placed extremely difficult pressure on both management and staff alike. In it's peak, St. Michael's had 13 members of outreach staff assisting clients. In 2016 we began the year with just seven practitioners, mainly because the charity received only a half of their historic funding from the local authority. Staff cuts became an inevitable part of this unfortunate episode. Some drastic changes needed to be implemented. For too long services in Lambeth have depended on the local authority, a feeling that's shared all too often by the voluntary sector nationally. The organisation has had to rethink the way in which funding is generated in order to continue with future operations. Alternative creative methods have since been applied, for example; more emphasis on charitable events such as marathons, bike rides and triathlons to help generate public sponsorship. We have also applied for funding in partnership with other agencies in the hope that this will maximise income. In some ways this might actually be a blessing in disguise because for so long voluntary organisations have been competing for funding and now they have to genuinely consider working together to ensure that clients needs are met by agencies jointly.*

OPF: Having heard from local practitioners, what is your impression of father-inclusive practice in Oxfordshire?

Seany: *I am utterly amazed at the magnitude of the services in place to support fathers in Oxfordshire and of the trailblazing methods that exist. I was endeared by the immense passion clearly generated by the practitioners that carry out the work to fathers. From my experience, father-inclusiveness in Oxfordshire is much more advanced than some of the practices I have encountered in other parts of the UK and should actually be used and promoted to highlight best practice nationally. There were several pieces of work that I was particularly in awe of, mainly the*

Saturday dads sessions and how much fathers rely on services offered by the local Children's Centres to accommodate contact. It's clear that something is working and more investment needs to be given to endorse fathers and their children so that services can expand to support men from other areas of the social spectrum such as younger fathers. I am keen to know what infrastructure is in place that connects young expectant men with maternity care in Oxfordshire and how much antenatal services in the county help to prepare these young men to become more engaged fathers. I

hope that the father-inclusive work that exists in Oxfordshire continues to grow and flourish, otherwise if the support becomes at risk of eradicating, I predict a huge financial blow will eventually be felt by local authority five to ten years down the line. Someone will be left to pick up the pieces of the fragmented and disenfranchised communities born via a lack of financial mindfulness to resolving the issues in the first place.

OPF: What do you think are the next steps for fathers work to become embedded in Oxfordshire and can you see yourself having a role to play in that?

Seany: Recently I have made some recommendations for Children's Centres in Lambeth to be taken over by voluntary organisations. I believe that this can change how fathers access local resources in a way that currently is not being felt in the borough. This operation could easily be piloted in Oxfordshire whereby Children's Centres become occupied by voluntary organisations to carry out joint partnership work with fathers. This can introduce more creative working measures by engaging fathers of all ages. Including fathers in countywide consultations will help shape how support is delivered to benefit them and their families long-term. I see scope for a countywide fatherhood forum that allows dads to help contribute to change, and for this forum to be formed in partnership with the local authority.

Essentially, the backing of health agencies is of vast importance, particularly maternal care. Fathers involvement in antenatal education is widely overlooked for a variety of complex reasons, and I have worked hard to change attitudes of maternity care in London so that men, especially young expectant men, are looked upon as the equal partner and that they matter to the wellbeing of their children from conception to birth and beyond. Further consideration should be given to the education offered to students from within health and social care in Oxfordshire, to examine whether fatherhood engagement forms a huge element of the academia overall. This is so vital because when these future practitioners eventually become qualified, they need to feel confident assisting fathers with the support. When that finally happens, we see more fathers being treated as equals in their children's lives and they are thought of as the solution to challenges within the breakdown of the family dynamic rather than 'the problem' or not even being thought of at all. 'Think Fathers', which I run nationally could definitely play a role in the future direction of fatherhood engagement within Oxfordshire. 'Think Fathers' offers soul-level, as well as extremely effective practical-level assistance to fathers and families via a range of different methods and evidence based programmes. 'Think Fathers' helps to strengthen relations between health and social care professionals and the dads they come into contact with during pregnancy, post birth and beyond. Training is also provided to health and social care students at University level around the importance of overall father engagement. These resources could be facilitated in Oxfordshire to continue and strengthen father-inclusive practice.

"I am utterly amazed at the magnitude of the services in place to support fathers in Oxfordshire...From my experience, father-inclusiveness in Oxfordshire is much more advanced than some of the practices I have encountered in other parts of the UK and should actually be used and promoted to highlight best practice nationally."

"There are so many exciting ways to expand fatherhood work in Oxfordshire by using 'out-of-the-box thinking' especially by tapping into the support that's currently being accessed by dads and their children."

PART FOUR - CASE STUDIES OF FATHER-INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN OXFORDSHIRE

4.1 Introduction to case studies

Following requests for evidence for father-inclusive practice from the field, the following case studies were submitted to Oxfordshire Parenting Forum.

Consent has been given by the contributors for this evidence to be published. Responsibility for accuracy about the background and context of these projects lies with their authors.

Where possible, all agencies referred to were contacted to provide evidence of their father-inclusive practice and have been given the opportunity to respond to the report's findings.

In other case studies, materials have already existed within the public domain and these have been commented on by the authors of this report.

All images have been used with the written and verbal consent from the individuals or from images already existing in the public domain.

In accordance with latest guidance from the Office for National Statistics and Oxfordshire County Council policy guidance on the use of data, figures have only been used when higher than 5 to avoid identification of individuals. If less than 5, this has only been used in tables, where data has already existed in the public domain or has the consent of the individuals.

Case studies of individuals have been anonymised and permission granted for use by these individuals. Permission has also been granted from individuals in case studies where they are identifiable.

Case studies have been chosen on the basis of their significance for taking forward work with fathers in Oxfordshire.

The report provides summaries of the key findings, challenges and next steps for these projects.



FATHERS' CHAMPIONS

Think Dad

OPF set up the 'Think Dad' task group to champion fathers work across the county. This network of OPF Fathers' Champions organises, funds and delivers dads events and services; they develop policy proposals and provide mutual support for practitioners. This is a summary of this work and the next steps Fathers' Champions think are necessary to embed fathers work into everyday practice.

Key findings

- ◆ 'Think Dad' was set up by OPF in 2003 by local practitioners. It is a forum for Fathers' Champions to meet in Oxfordshire.
- ◆ Achievements included a Fathers' Champions Fund to give grants for dads work, the Oxondads website, the Dads Go Wild family play events, mental wellbeing project, support for the Man Enough parenting programme, funding of outdoor learning projects and reports on fathers' work.
- ◆ Fathers' Champions next steps include support for the 1001 days campaign, Caring Dads programme, a Dads Charter and training.
- ◆ OPF's role in funding fathers work and providing practitioner support has now come to an end.
- ◆ OCC strategic leads have met with an OPF representative in 2016 to discuss ways to champion a whole family approach in its new service model.

Background

OPF has travelled a long journey promoting fathers work within the county. It has had a hand in most of the initiatives, which are charted in the time-line of development listed in this report. This started with development work funded by the County Council and a Fathers' Champions Fund to support local initiatives. These have included many excellent projects and support for 'Saturdays' groups in Children's Centres and the annual Dads Go Wild open air events which attracted hundreds of participants. A particularly fruitful development was the Dads Outdoors project which led to much innovation in introducing dads to outdoor learning and bushcraft skills to fathers and their children. At the same time that it was supporting practice, OPF was trying to develop a support network for fathers' groups and an online information source for fathers. The Think Dad group, as it was known, brought together practitioners for mutual support and the coordination of events. It was also used as a sounding board for the Oxondads website and blog which provide information for fathers and raise awareness of fathers' issues and forthcoming events. Four years ago the group changed its name to the Fathers' Champions Network, reflecting its wish to encourage advocates of fathers work to see themselves as local Champions of the cause. This objective has yet to be fulfilled and to do so will require a greater commitment from a wider range of agencies than are currently involved. The future success of fathers work in the county now depends on OCC strategic leads and senior managers in social care, health and the Safeguarding Board becoming Dads champions and embedding a whole family approach in everyday practice.



Next steps for Oxfordshire

- OCC's 2011 Dads Sounding Board recommended that OPF's 'Think Dad' group should be supported by senior managers in family services, Social care leads and a Safeguarding Board representative.
- Since 2011 OPF 'Think Dad' meetings have predominately been attended by practitioners such as Dads workers, social workers and Children's Centre managers. Future meetings would benefit from the attendance of senior managers in OCC, social care, health services and a Safeguarding Board representative.
- Championing of fathers work by OPF Dads Champions and grassroots staff has started to overcome institutional barriers to fathers work to create a cultural shift in favour of this work.
- Managers of services are more likely to champion fathers work if they are instructed by strategic leads. Current OCC strategic leads have stated their commitment to a whole family approach in its new service model in 2017.
- OCC managers previously funded OPF to run the successful Fathers Champion Fund. Will OCC be able to fund fathers work in future?

Rationale for championing fathers work

- It can raise the profile of fathers work to the point where senior managers and strategic leads take an interest.
- It can introduce senior managers to evidence-based research which shows the benefits to families when men are included in services and services adopt a whole family approach.
- It can enable senior managers to become aware of best practice with fathers in their own locality and how this provision is a useful resource to the local authority.
- It can prompt senior managers to see fathers work as their responsibility and be prepared to champion this themselves in a top-down model.
- It can help grass root workers feel acknowledged and supported to continue their work with men and become less likely to burn out or leave the sector.
- It can ensure greater collaborative work develops between services, strategic leads, stakeholders and practitioners which helps efficiency in a time of austerity.
- It can lead to local authorities completing Dad Test audits, commissioning staff training and providing new services in order to embed a whole family approach into its everyday practice.
- It can prompt Safeguarding Boards and social care leads to make the connection between fathers work and safeguarding and adapt their practice accordingly.
- It can prompt health service leads to reflect on their practice to include fathers more and support men to contribute to the healthy outcomes of their children and partners.
- It can help local authorities to improve their image as being inclusive, progressive and leaders in practice.



A good example of how this process can work effectively is provided in a national case study in this report of a comparative local authority, Bath & N.East Somerset Council, which adopted a top-down model of Dads championing in 2013. This led to its strategic leads, senior managers, commissioners, training officers and its local Safeguarding Board committing to a year long campaign to embed father-inclusive practice. This led to a series of improvements in family outcomes and increased the positive image of the local authority.

OPF's role in championing fathers work

'Think Dad' Task Group

OPF members and staff set up the group in 2003. In later years the group was maintained by OPF fathers' workers and was attended by a range of OCC and voluntary sector practitioners and managers. In 2012 it was renamed the Fathers' Champions Network. The group's purpose is to promote the role of fathers in all aspects of their children's lives. Its objectives include:

1. To act as a forum for practitioners in work with fathers to share information and practice.
 2. To act as an action group for developing and expanding work with fathers in the county.
 3. To develop and oversee the Oxondads website, produce content, keep it up to date.
 4. To act as an advisory group for the OPF Fathers' workers.
 5. To assess bids to the Fathers' Champions Fund when funds are available.
 6. To organise events, training and campaigns to further the objectives of the group.
 7. To support Fathers' Champions and encourage championing from all levels of services.
- Champions have stated they have benefitted greatly from information sharing at the bi-monthly meetings by having the opportunity to plan and share father-inclusive strategies.
 - Champions have contributed greatly to the development of fathers work across the county by visiting new settings to champion fathers work, helping centres set up new dads groups and advising new Dads workers on how to deliver father-inclusive practice.
 - Champions have used the Fathers' Champion Fund to deliver services just for dads such as parenting skills, baby massage, PEEP, wellbeing sessions and outdoor learning projects.
 - Champions have been instrumental in organising and running dads events, such as Dads Go Wild and Fathers Reading Everyday campaigns. These have raised the profile of fathers work in the county and promoted men as a resource to their children's outcomes.
 - Champions that have attended Think Dads meetings from 2003-2016 and gone onto champion father-inclusive practice in their fields include solicitors, housing officers, mental health workers, youth workers, male health workers, domestic abuse leads, parenting leads, dads workers, social workers, early years practitioners, the Oxfordshire Family Information Service, PEEP, postnatal workers, mediation services, outdoor learning and Children's Centre managers.
 - In 2012, the group was renamed Fathers' Champions Network to emphasise the need for Fathers' Champions across all agencies. This was a shift from supporting practice into one of being pro-active in advocating changes in policy and practice in services for fathers. Champions tasks were defined as *"To support and advise on the involvement of fathers within one's setting, identifying gaps and ensuring that fathers are included and have a voice, to promote the awareness and inclusion of fathers through local partnerships, to gather and disseminate information about fathers' needs and best practice."*
 - The network continues to be popular with practitioners, with the group having a mailing list of over 50 active members. The network has not been successful in convincing senior managers and strategic leads from OCC, social care, health services and the local Safeguarding Board to attend meetings or become Fathers' Champions in their field.
 - From 2013, the Fathers' Champions Network re-focussed its aims to include gathering local research of father-inclusive practice and present a series of reports to demonstrate its effectiveness. This is so that the local authority can be lobbied for greater leadership, resources and workforce development and embed a whole family approach. It is also to influence the County Council and other funders to financially support this work in future.

Profile of an OPF 'Think Dad' Fathers' Champion

As a father of two sons, Mark Ginsburg attended his first father-inclusive parenting programme, Man Enough in 1999. After which he joined Oxfordshire Parenting Forum and began to facilitate the programme himself alongside Albert Ford. Mark is trained as a social worker and was appointed the first Father's Champion, supporting social workers covering the Oxford area. As a Fathers' Champion he has helped to set up OPF's 'Think Dad' Task Group. He has also been running Saturdays sessions for male carers at South Abingdon Children's centre since 2009. Mark continues to facilitate and set up the Man Enough programme in other areas of the county. Mark is also a trained facilitator of the Making Changes perpetrator programme in Oxfordshire. As a Fathers' Champion, Mark has been able to promote the needs of male carers in his field of social care and child protection. Mark wants to increase awareness and provision of a differentiated approach for work with male carers. He is currently championing the development of services for fathers in the postnatal period, the safeguarding of children from domestic abuse and the need for practitioner support and institutional changes within Oxfordshire social care services.



■ 'Man Enough' Parenting programme.

A gender-differentiated approach ensures programmes are more effective with male carers, they engage more male carers and they challenge institutional barriers that fathers feel when they try to access services predominantly built around the needs of mothers. Mark has had first hand experience of delivering a gender-differentiated programme when facilitating Man Enough. This parenting skills programme has been successfully delivered to men over the last 15 years. It is delivered by all male facilitators, delivered in evening times when fathers are able to access support and delivered to all male groups of carers. Although OCC delivers other approved evidence based programmes, over the years Man Enough has proven to be the most successful in engaging fathers in the county. Mark recently facilitated the programme in Oxfordshire in 2015 for Action for Children at South Abingdon Children's Centre and in 2016 at Red Kite Children's Centre in Thame. A full case study of programme can be found in the report. The legacy of Mark championing this father-inclusive approach has been that male carers have accessed parenting support they otherwise would not have done through traditional routes. OCC leads have also acknowledged that gender-differentiated approaches are more effective with men. The Early Intervention Hub directory stated in 2014:



"We recognise that the programme across the year has biased a particular gender group to the detriment of a whole family approach. Some services are already exploring use of single gendered groups to encourage participation. EIS must be proactive about making their programmes accessible to targeted groups, including male carers, who are underrepresented in accessing programmes, and to refining the delivery of the programme accordingly."

■ 'Caring Dads' parenting and domestic abuse programme

Until recently, Mark was a member of The 'Making Changes' perpetrator programme facilitator team which has successfully worked with abusive fathers in Oxfordshire. This programme now requires further funding to continue and new referrals are currently on hold. A full case study can be found in this report. Mark has been championing social care to commission 'The Caring Dads' programme as an additional intervention. This programme aims to help fathers improve their relationship with their children and to end controlling abusive and neglectful behaviours. The 17 week programme combines elements of parenting, fathering, and child protection practice in group work of up to 12 fathers. Mark believes the benefit of social care commissioning this programme to safeguard children is that it specifically works with fathers who have children rather than just men and it works with men motivated to change their abusive behaviours by their fatherhood. 'The Caring Dads' programme is currently being commissioned by local authorities, social services and probation services across the UK, it has undergone initial evidence-based evaluation and is supported by the NSPCC and The Fatherhood Institute.



■ '1001 Critical Days Campaign' and PEEPLE

As a trained social worker, Mark's experience of supporting fathers with complex needs such as substance misuse, mental health issues and domestic violence, has led him to support the national all party '1001 Critical Days' campaign. This campaign is calling for services to recognise the importance of supporting families as early as possible in order to improve babies outcomes and reduce risk. He is currently based in the J.R Hospital so is aware of the critical role of early intervention with male carers. He has also been involved in running Saturdads sessions at South Abingdon Children's Centre which has successfully introduced antenatal support specifically for fathers with babies, including baby massage and PEEPLE postnatal parenting sessions for dads. Mark explains: "One dad remarked how he had struggled with singing until he had the



time to not only practice but also learned how nursery rhymes integrate language with physical awareness and dexterity, making him more determined to overcome his aversion to singing: "it was fine when you knew what you were doing". Another dad at PEEPLE observed "it would be a good time for me to bond with my son, help give his mum a rest and give him a chance to do whatever he wanted to try". The PEEP group provided space where dads "felt comfortable" and steadily became "more confident" - partly through having the chance to observe other fathers manage their perhaps slightly older babies, and get an insight into what lay ahead. Most of the group members worked, so this time was a crucial part of their busy lives to focus upon their child. It also led to many new fathers going on to attend the Saturdads group for toddlers.

■ 'Fathers' Charter'

The institutional barriers that fathers face from social care services have been highlighted by the national research of Brid Featherstone, Jonathan Scourfield and Gavin Swann, whose research can be found in a national case study in this report. Mark believes that fathers still face barriers in engaging with Oxfordshire services and this limits their impact with families. He believes the way to reduce this is for services to sign up to a 'Fathers' Charter' that commits agencies to 'buy into' father-inclusive strategies and ensures a whole family approach is embedded into everyday

practice. Mark is in contact with the leading UK father-inclusive practitioners should there be appetite for a 'Fathers' Charter' template to be developed. This would be provided to a range of agencies such as OCC social care, health services, midwifery and education for them to sign up to father-inclusive practice. This Charter could then be championed by OCC strategic leads and be promoted across the children's partnerships in Oxfordshire. Mark believes the Charter needs to have an emphasis on adult services, such as housing and prison services rather than just Children's Centre services, which are to be restructured into a new family service model in 2017.

Fathers' Champions Fund

In 2006 Oxfordshire County Council provided funding for a Fathers' Champions Fund to pump prime fathers work within family services. Practitioners were encouraged to apply for grants that supported their work with fathers. Case studies of this work are examined elsewhere in this report. In summary:



2006-2007

11 grants were issued for fathers project work, this totalled £15,439. These funds helped to set up 'Saturdays' groups across the county to encourage male carers to access father friendly stay and play sessions in Children's Centres. The outcome of this work was a rapid increase of early years services reaching male carers and working with the whole family. One Children's Centre that introduced Saturdays sessions went on to increase their reach to 47% all fathers with an under 5 year old in their catchment, this was 5 times more than the county average.

2007-2008

7 grants were issued for fathers project work, this totalled £6,655. From this, £2,000 was used to help to set up a new dads website called Oxondads. Funds were also used to employ a new Fathers development worker to work across the county and plan the first of a series of Dads Go Wild fun day events. The rationale for the website was that fathers were making extensive use of social media which enabled them to be signposted to family services. The development work was designed to respond to the awareness of the benefits of fathers work by early years settings who then went on to start dads groups.

2008-2009

A grant of £2,000 was awarded to cover the costs of Think Dad group's first Dad Go Wild day at South Oxford Adventure Playground, which was attended by about 300 male carers and 200 female carers. Debi Redding, OPF's Fathers worker at the time provided the enthusiasm and leadership for the event. This development work led to about 20 separate fathers groups out of 44 settings starting up across the county and increased attendance of fathers at Saturdays sessions. Fathers groups became mainstream Children's Centre activities and this led in turn to the local authority employing more Dads workers.

2009-2010

OPF's Fathers' Champion Fund paid a further £7,045 worth of grants for fathers project work. This included OPF's funding of a 2nd larger Dads Go Wild event at Hinksey Park. This was organised by OPF's 2 Fathers development workers, Conroy Harris and Glen Scrivener. About 700 people attended the event. OPF also collaborated with OCC's Oxford Family Information Service to produce a new information booklet for dads. The booklet contained valuable information for all dads



about the services available to them in the county and activities that they can do with their children. OPF funded an event in Oxford city to launch the booklet and the revamped Oxondads website. The collaboration with OFIS increased the signposting of fathers to local family information and the attendance of fathers at early years settings. Local authority settings began to become more father friendly.

2010-2011

OPF's Fathers' Champion Fund provided £7,188 for fathers project work. With a 3 year grant from the Wates Foundation it was able to continue its employment of 3 part time fathers development workers, which now included Rob Beal who was recruited to deliver outdoor learning projects with fathers and their children. Glen Scrivener and Conroy Harris continued to support settings that wanted to start up new dads groups across the county. Glen worked with 9 Children's Centres to model father-inclusive practice, often supporting settings without a designated Dads worker and those wanting to start up a Saturday session. OPF funded workers to deliver Dads Go Wild activities at Hill End's Outdoor Learning and Play Festival. OPF father development workers delivered a Fathers Work Seminar at OPF's annual "What Works" conference. The legacy of this work was that more fathers continued to access family services, with up to 40 male carers at a time attending some centre's weekly dads stay and plays. It also led to clustering of local centres as they began to form their own networks of fathers work in their regions, such as new 'Dads Worker Network South' meetings attended by Abingdon North, Abingdon South, Wallingford, Grove, Faringdon and Didcot centre workers.

2011-2012

OPF's Fathers' Champion Fund provided £7,592 for fathers project work. Over 40 settings and Dads workers were now signed up as Think Dad Champions running dads events across the county. OPF funded dads work included a project delivered by the Roundabout Children's Centre which enabled fathers to support their children's early speech and language development. This involved fathers reading storybooks to camera, these were edited with illustrations and compiled onto a DVD for Dads to take home to continue their children's learning. Elms Road Children's Centre developed fathers parenting skills by using £500 from OPF to widen the participation of fathers with a 'Man Enough' parenting programme for dads. OPF funded new Baby Massage sessions for fathers based in East Oxford to improve early parental attachments. The Leys Children's Centre used funding for a residential trip for fathers and their children to kick start work with hard to reach dads with complex needs. Grandpont Children's Centre used £500 to enable local dads to buy den making materials and help build a permanent water play facility. The centre acquired a mobile fire pit to help dads and children attend forest school activities in order to help with school readiness.

Conroy Harris was employed to develop project work with fathers and their mental wellbeing through partnership work with Oxford United FC and Oxfordshire Mind. Its aims were to:

- Increase fathers' self-esteem and confidence as individuals and as fathers.
- Develop fathers' understanding of their own emotions and how to manage them within a family context.
- Promote fathers' personal development through building resilience and goal-setting.
- Draw fathers and their children into a closer relationship based on football and fitness.

The 6 week programme was based at Oxford United's Kassam Stadium with use of the club's gym and meeting. This involved group work based on skills for life, cognitive behaviour therapy methodology and fitness training. Each session lasted 3 hours. The first programme concluded on April 2011. The second ran from October to November 2011. A total of 20 male carers completed the programme. *See full case study.*

The outcome of this various projects was that early years settings began to target more vulnerable male carers who needed early learning, play and parenting support to improve their

children's outcomes. Settings were now encouraging dads to take ownership of their own services. OPF's funding of dads work in Children's Centres enabled this niche work to become mainstream practice. This was confirmed when Pam Beal, a Children's Centre Area manager conducted an audit of all fathers' activities, groups and services available in the county.

2012-2013

Oxfordshire County Council's funding of OPF's fathers work came to an end in 2012 and OPF was solely reliant on its independent funding streams, such as the Wates Foundation. OPF was still able to provide £5070 for 6 grants from the Fathers' Champions Fund for fathers project work, including funds for the annual Dads Go Wild event that took place again at Hill End Outdoor Centre. It was reported that around 1000 people attended the play event with around 400 being male carers. The event included an additional pre-camp out for male carers and their children, organised by OPF's Think Dad group. OPF was able to continue to employ its 3 Father development workers. Glen Scrivener continued to develop the website, offer Children's Centre practitioner support and convene 'Think Dads' meetings. The inter-agency Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group gave OPF a grant for a pilot project with young and vulnerable fathers. Conroy Harris led this work. Rob Beal completed his dads outdoor learning project. An average of 78 fathers and 106 children regularly took part in a range of outdoor activities over the nine months of funded work. 68% of fathers believed their children had increased in self-confidence and self-esteem following this project. OPF funded the publication of Rob's final report. The outcome of this project was improved children's learning outcomes from increased father involvement and parental attachment.



2013-2014

OPF was now no longer able to fund project work due to the ending of OCC's funding. A survey completed by practitioners stated that they still wanted OPF to play a leading role in the county, particularly in providing networking and information exchange, practitioner support, training, conferences and seminars. Using funds from the Wates Foundation, OPF continued to employ Glen Scrivener to run the website, manage Think Dad meetings and offer practitioner support. OPF did joint work with Grandpont Children's centre to deliver a series of 4 parenting workshops for male carers. This was in conjunction with Paula Evans from Webster-Stratton Dinosaur programme and Martin Andrews, the centre's Dads worker. The process was started by the group of fathers exploring a male perspective on parenting and producing Top Tips to put into a leaflet for those attending parenting skills programmes. Following 4 dads workshops, popularity grew and 4 more were delivered, reaching 34 fathers in total. OPF obtained the permission of the Wates Foundation to re-focus the resources previously allocated to project work to research into the effectiveness of father-inclusive parenting programmes and fund the publication of a final report. This led to the Early Intervention Hub Directory making its recommendation to deliver parenting programmes in a more father-inclusive manner across its seven Oxfordshire settings within a whole family approach. The outcome of this work has been the demonstration that when evidence based parenting programme are delivered in a father-inclusive manner, such as evening times, to all male groups, by facilitators trained in working with men, they are more effective in engaging fathers.

2014-2015

OPF continued to employ Glen Scrivener to run the website, manage Think Dad meetings and offer practitioner support. Martin Andrews continued in his role as Fathers research and development officer. This work involved supporting local settings to complete a Dads Test audit to enable them to be father-inclusive, attending city and county leads meetings to disseminate key research findings to centre managers and attending a series of national fathers conferences

and the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood to share best practice in fathers work. OPF funded the delivery of a Fathers seminar 'Future-proofing fathers work' and the publication of this report. The seminar was seen as an essential practitioner support in a climate of austerity and closures of services. The publication of this report is regarded by OPF as an important examination into the wider situation of father-inclusive work in the county.

It is hoped its recommendations will enable authorities to be lobbied for leadership, resources and workforce development and used to influence future funders. OPF met with OCC strategic leads to discuss ways that OCC's new Children's and Family Centre service model for 2017 could be delivered with a whole family approach. It is hoped the impact of this report will see the embedding of a whole family approach into everyday practice of Oxfordshire services.

OPF's role in encouraging the local authority to champion fathers work

Historically Oxfordshire County Council managers have helped significantly to promote fathers work in Children's Centres by employing Dads workers and providing funding to OPF for project workers and small grants which spawned a wide range of good practice. However, this report was unable to find consistent evidence that this has been matched by a cultural shift in the policies of family services. The OPF Think Dad group and its successor, The Fathers' Champions Network, were intended to "*encourage the championing of fathers work at all levels of services*". This report recommends this forum would benefit from increased engagement from senior managers of services to take forward the progress at grassroots level into strategic decision making.

Please note - The author of this report would like to acknowledge that current OCC transformation leads responsible for implementing a new 0-19 year old integrated family service in 2017 have demonstrated strategic leadership in championing father-inclusive practice. They have done this by agreeing to meet with OPF in February and April 2016 to discuss the findings of this report. At these meetings the strategic leads stated their commitment to support a whole family approach and consider this report's key recommendations in future policy.

A new Dads champions forum

Despite the ongoing austerity measures by the local authority, the Fathers' Champions Network group still believes that lead officers from different services in the county have a good opportunity to show their commitment to fathers work. This can be done by services adopting successful father-inclusive practices highlighted in case studies in this report, embedding them into OCC's new service model for families in 2017 and promoting a greater integrated service. The report recommends that any current momentum towards the championing of father-inclusive practice will only be maintained if services working with children and families create a 'strategic forum', similar to OPF's Fathers' Champions Network. This would require senior manager from family services, health services and social care to meet to consider the recommendations of this report and develop a whole family approach in their services.

DADS, PLAY & LEARNING



Since 2008 there has been a rapid increase in fathers attending OCC stay and plays that support men to be a resource to their children. Many dads have attended county wide play events that celebrate fatherhood and annual family play days. This report believes that services need to adopt a 'whole family approach'. This requires services to offer all fathers access to play and learning activities which lead to improved outcomes for children.

Key findings

- ◆ Research shows that fathers that play with their children improve outcomes for their families.
- ◆ From 2008-2015, OPF has organised annual 'Dads Go Wild' events to celebrate fatherhood and promote play,
- ◆ 700 people attended the Dads Go Wild event in 2009.
- ◆ Events have provided learning and play interactions between dads and their children, promoted the role of fathers as a resource and signposted men to services that offer support.
- ◆ OCC's new Children and Family Centres in 2017 could provide universal stay and play sessions for dads which would help children benefit from early attachments, school readiness and language development.
- ◆ Funding is continuing to be cut for play and learning in the county. OPA continues to deliver play events. If targeted at fathers these could help to meet a play and learning service gap for dads.
- ◆ Local schools may need to be supported to organise father & child play and reading events.

Background

Oxfordshire has a good record of offering outstanding play activities for families. Oxfordshire Play Association has been organising family play days across the county since 1974. Outdoor learning groups has regularly organised play days at Hill End outdoor centre and Oxfordshire County Council has provided funding for these in the past knowing that play provides excellent learning opportunities for children and families. Oxfordshire Parenting Forum believes in a 'whole family approach' and its Fathers' Champions Network has promoted the need for play events to specifically target fathers. The first of these events was a 'Dads Go Wild' play day in 2008 at South Oxford Adventure Playground. The success of this event heralded the start of annual play days aimed at dads. These were designed to engage as many fathers as possible in Oxfordshire, celebrate the role of fathers and male carers and promote men as a resource rather than a risk in their children lives.

Benefits of play

Wendy Russell is a senior lecturer in play at the University of Gloucester and has researched the benefits of play:

"Play develops different areas of the brain to help with unexpected development and a complex environment. Playtime also helps to build attachments to people and places, which is crucial for health and creativity."



Next steps for Oxfordshire

- Dads play events require time and effort to run effectively, often involving champions who volunteer their free time. OPF has taken a lead on organising dads events but may not be able to continue to do this as its role changes.
- Play and learning is not regarded as high a priority as safeguarding by some services who are only obliged to work with men who pose a risk to their child. The benefits of men as a resource to their children need promoting.
- Funding streams have to be found to fund father events. The local authorities previous funding of OPA events and training has been cut. Can funding be found in OCC's new service model to promote the benefits of play and learning for children's development?
- OCC managers will need to consider offering gender-differentiated services and play events for dads and provide men with open access to services if they want children's learning to increase in its new service.
- Play events that receive charity sector funding may not have a specific father-inclusive remit. Can the role of fathers be promoted more in future?
- Fathers Champions will need to develop partnership work with charities such as OPA to co-deliver events targeted at fathers and promote men's role in learning.

UK research on fathers and play

Research from 2005 revealed that British dads devote more time to playing with their children than their European counterparts. British dads spend the equivalent of a full day at work (eight hours) playing with their children every week. This is twice as much as French fathers, who devote only four hours to playtime, and more than Dutch and Swiss fathers who spend five and six hours respectively.

Jan Van Gils, President of the International Play Association:

"Play is one of the best ways for children to learn and develop and dads tend to be more active and boisterous in the way they play, so they're great at indulging kids in exhilarating and mucky outdoor games which are essential for a child's development. By devoting more time to play, British dads are helping their children learn how to express their feelings and develop their personality and skills."



According to the research, playing with their offspring is British dad's favourite past time. In-fact, almost half (46%) of the dads surveyed would rather play with their kids than do their hobby (19%), watch sport on TV (18%), go to the pub with their mates (10%) or watch a film at the cinema (5%). Seven out of ten British dads said they wish they could devote even more time to playing with their children.

Supporting dads as a resource reduces risk

UK research listed in the Fatherhood Institute's 'Why Dads Matter' guide demonstrates that a father's role in play and positive interactions, improves outcomes and reduces risk:

"Children at risk of social problems, poverty and maternal drug abuse, talk and learn better when their fathers provide financial support, engage in nurturing play and are satisfied with parenting."

"Physically playful, affectionate and socially engaging father-child interactions at age 3-4 predict later popularity with peers, particularly when father and child take turns to make play suggestions and lead the play."

"There is a strong link between positive, highly involved fatherhood and positive outcomes for children in terms of resilience to anti-social behaviour and its correlates such as school failure."

Research shows that children who grow up with actively involved fathers tend to be/have:

Higher IQs, better health outcomes, better mental health, less depression, fewer behaviour problems, less emotional distress, more resilience to stress, fewer phobias, less delinquent behaviour, lower criminality and substance abuse, greater capacity for empathy, higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction, non-traditional attitudes to earning and childcare, more resourceful, greater self-direction, greater self-control, less aggression, more tolerant, increased social competence, healthier relationships with peers both as adolescents and adults, better friendships, greater social adjustment, better sibling interactions.

OPF organised play events for dads across Oxfordshire

OPF has a good track record of delivering play events for dads between 2008 and 2015 with different events organised to target both universal and hard to reach dads. OPF's 'Think Dads' Champion meetings have been instrumental in getting workers across Oxfordshire services to meet, organise events and volunteer at them. These have included:

- ★ 2008 - A dads event at Oxford United FC's Kassam Stadium and a 'Dads Go Wild' event in South Oxford Adventure Playground attended by approx 500 dads.
- ★ 2009 - A Dads Go Wild event in Hinksey Park in 2009, attended by approx 1000 people.
- ★ 2010 - 2012 - Dads Go Wild stalls and activities at Family Play days at the Hill End outdoor centre.
- ★ 2013 - OPF and Fathers' Champions organised a pop up Father's Day event with Oxford City Council with outdoor activities in Gloucester Green and a fathers photographic exhibition.
- ★ 2014 - OPF Fathers' Champions organised events in Children's Centres and schools for Father's Day and promoted the Fatherhood Institute's 'Father's Reading Every Day' campaign.
- ★ 2015 - OPF Fathers' Champions and Sovereign Housing co-funded an outdoor Father's Day event at South Abingdon Children's centre.
- ★ 2016 - OPF Fathers' Champions would like to work with Oxfordshire Play Association to include 'Dads Go Wild' activities at Play day events across the county to engage fathers.

'Dads Go Wild', Hinksey Park, 2009

On 3 October 2009, OPF organised a large play day event for dads and their children in Oxford's Hinksey park. The organisers were Fathers' Champions from OPF 'Think Dads' group and workers at Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill and Grandpont Children's centres.

- An estimated 700 people attended the event.
- Activities included drumming circle, jousting, circus tents, inflatable sumo wrestling suits, large climbing wall, music stage with live bands, bungee running, straw bale play area, kids science by BBC TV presenter Dr Yan Wong, children's song time and story time, food stalls, storytelling, face painting, bouncy castle, children's stilts, play dough and art and crafts, bubbles, Emergency Service vehicles, Oxford Utd FC Academy penalty shoot out, playground area, wood carving, yoga, park trails, cardboard city, prize draw.



- 500 Silicone wristbands given out to promote DGW and OPF's new Oxondads website.
- 50 volunteers from OPF, OCC & dads supervised the event.
- Info stalls by Oxfordshire Family Information Service, OCC Sure Start centres, MIND, Fire safety, BookStart, Men's Health services.

Feedback about the event

50 families completed evaluation and feedback forms on the day of the event:

David Cole, 38, and his nine-year-old daughter Phoebe, who were wrestling each other in sumo outfits said: ***"It was a great day. It's nice to get the dads involved"***. Phoebe said: ***"I think it's really fun. The wrestling is probably the most fun thing I have done with my dad. I like spending time with him. He is the best, he always makes me laugh."***

Nick Iles and his three-year-old son Felix took part in a drumming workshop together. Mr Iles, 30, of Wolvercote, said: ***"There is lot of variety and everyone seemed to be having fun. It's a great idea to get dads together. Felix has liked the drumming and singing, he likes musical things, that tickled his fancy the most."***

James Reeve, 41, of Whitehouse Road, was watching his children William, three, and Freya, two, paint giant cardboard boxes with wife Megan, 40. He said: ***"It was a brilliant day. You could see how your child plays, which is quite important, interact with other dads and meet other kids as well and just make friends."***

Paddy Reaney, 48, from Oxford, and his son Aidan, three, played on the hay bales together. He said: ***"Anything that encourages dads to go out with the kids is a good thing."***

Male carer comments: ***"These events are really important...being just for dads was the motivation for coming...I need support as a lone dad and speaking to you has really helped."***



'Dads Go wild', Hill End outdoor centre, 2010

On 24 and 25 September 2010, OPF's Dads Go Wild team joined forces with the Oxfordshire Outdoor Learning Service, Oxfordshire Outside, Oxfordshire Play Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council Participation and Play Team to offer a celebration of outdoor learning and play for families.

- Aims of the event were to raise awareness of educational, health and social benefits of outdoor learning and play for children, promote Hill End as a fantastic outdoor resource and raise the profile of fathers work in the county.
- OPF provided small grant funds for practitioners to provide transport for hard to reach dads and this enabled young dads and separated fathers to attend. OPF provided workers to run the dads activities and dads info bar and used their Think Dads champion meetings to encourage Children's centre workers to attend and signpost dads at their settings.
- Activities included making kites with your dad, Geo -dome construction with the Without Walls team, drumming workshop and musical instrument making, the Bubble man's interactive bubble display, Dads information bar with health tips, fatherhood info and advice, water play and large water pipe run offs.
- About 500 families attended the two day event.
- Annual Dads Go Wild events were repeated at Hill End in 2011 and 2012 and attended by around 1000 dads, partners and children.



"The dads worker got some money from Dads Go Wild to fund our transport there and back. It meant me and the 2 kids could had a fun day out which we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise" Young father



‘Dads Go Wild’ Father’s day celebrations, Gloucester green, 2013

On 15 June 2013, OPF Fathers’ Champions Network marked annual father’s day celebrations by organising a learning and play event for male carers and their children in the centre of Oxford.

- Oxford City Council provided the urban outdoor space of Gloucester green for ‘pop up’ activities for dads and their kids.
- The nearby indoor space of The Old Fire station Art gallery displayed a photographic exhibition of male carers who had attended the various Saturdads groups over the last year.
- Activities included an urban mud kitchen, fire pit, outdoor cooking, juggling workshop, mad science workshop, cardboard city, kids song time, charcoal mark making, dads info stalls and Oxfordshire Family Information Service, kite making and Bubble man finale.
- Aprox 100 people attended the 4 hour ‘pop up’ event and week long photographic exhibition celebrating male carers.



OPF & OCC Father’s Day celebrations, 2014

To celebrate father’s day on 15 June 2014, Fathers’ Champion Network suggested that Dads workers based in various OCC Children’s Centres could promote reading with dads and their children. The network sent this request to all settings via the OCC quick place newsletter and a number of Children’s Centres organised dads’ reading events. This included Grandpont Children’s Centre who promoted Fathers’ Story Week and the Fatherhood Institute’s Fathers Reading Every Day campaign (FRED) at a special Saturdads event at their centre. This work was later published as a case study on the Fatherhood Institute website:

What they did on the day

- The team discussed with the dads at the centre about The Fatherhood Institute’s campaign to encourage fathers to read with their children every day and handed out free books.
- They arranged a ‘storytime’ for the dads and children delivered by the local OCC library service, using materials from Bookstart that were themed around ‘superheroes’.
- They made ‘superhero’ cards by taking photos of the dads at the session and then getting the children to turn their dad into a flying superhero.
- They asked dads for ‘selfie’ photos to contribute to the Fatherhood Institute’s Facebook campaign.
- They invited children to dress up in their superhero costumes and engaged with dads to talk about the ‘super qualities’ they felt were important as carers of their children.

- They organised a Baby Club for Dads 'stay and play' before the main drop in to encourage dads to attend with babies.
- They followed up the morning session with an additional storyteller activity organised at the local St. Ebbes Primary School's afternoon Fete.

Who attended the session

They had 13 male carers, including 2 male carers with babies. They had 18 children from 1-5 years and additionally 4 babies from 0-1 years. They had a male carer contact visit and a male volunteer who accessed the centre to gain experience to facilitate his adoption application. The school session with a male storyteller was delivered to 15 children and 5 male carers.

"It helps being able to meet other dads who use the Centre. I might not have used the Centre as much if there had not been a dads group, It's nice to have a friendly male environment, where the dads can develop at their own pace and get some tips and advice." [male carer]

"It was good to see so many dads at the story time session." [library professional]

"I attend the Saturdads sessions and greatly look forward to playing with my daughter at the Centre." [Separated BME male carer]

"As a new father with a baby its been a real bonus having somewhere local that is so supportive and geared towards dads." [male carer with baby]

"I thought the Baby PEEP session was very good. It covered lots of interesting stuff like treasure baskets, books for babies and singing which I can try at home."
[male carer with baby]



Oxfordshire Play Association Family Play days

OPA have been organising family play events in Oxfordshire since its foundation in 1974. OPA organises annual city play days which have proven to be very popular with families. Play days which ran in 2012 saw 16,200 people visit, while in 2013 this increased to 23,000 people. Events cost £4000 to run and OPA's main source of support has been from Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Community First Fund and the Ministry of Defence. OCC has also funded OPA to deliver accredited training in play work, paying 85% of each student's fees. This led to OPA increasing the number of workers in Oxfordshire who have play work qualifications from 9 in 2012 to 34 in 2013.



- In 2012 and 2013 OPA organised a series of Armed Forces play days events funded by the Ministry of Defence. These took place at various barracks across the county, including Vauxhall Barracks, RAF Brize Norton, Shrivenham Defence Academy, Bicester Garrison and Dalton Barracks. Average attendances at each event totalled around 1350 people.
- OPA's most successful scheme was a series of free play days which ran over the summer 2014 to celebrate its 40th anniversary. These were funded by OCC and delivered at various Children's centres



and community sites on 10 separate activity days; Littlemore, Wantage, Farringdon, Banbury, Chipping Norton, Bicester, Cholsey, Thame, Witney and Leys.

- Activities at OPA play days include: body zorbing, smoothie bike, bouldering wall, fire play, go-karting, mobile skate park, big Sumo suits, circus skills, music making, drumming and MC'ing, Hay bale play, live museum specimens, First Aid demos, healthy eating advice, soft play, martial arts, street dance, face painting, sport tasters, the Playbus etc.
- OPA are currently planning more Play day events in 2016 that will have a capacity of around 500 people. OPF Fathers Champions Network are keen to be part of these events to target fathers as play and learning resources for their children.



"What we want to do is advocate the message that play is fun and free. These days too many children will stay indoors playing on computer games all day. We're trying to make it as easy and low-cost as possible to get kids outdoors."

Mark Lygo, dad of two, OPA's chairman and Oxford city councillor

Reduced resources for learning and play opportunities for families

Oxfordshire County Council has financially supported and funded OPA events and training in the past. This report acknowledges the support from senior OCC leads in championing the importance of play for developing positive parent-child interactions, promoting a whole family approach and improving children's outcomes:

"Oxfordshire County Council recognises the importance of play, and we do everything we can to support OPA. Play is so important to health, and it's about bringing families together in a healthy lifestyle. Just simple things like playing in the park or going for walks together is crucial for relationships." Maria Godfrey, Transformation Manager, OCC

Despite championing by OCC strategic leads, the local authority has needed to cut its budgets and this has had a direct impact on its capacity to support organisations like OPA. Consequently, by 2015 OCC had cut all its funding of OPA events and its accredited training in play work.

"The aim is to get families out playing together. We're constantly applying for new grants, anywhere and everywhere. Funding is going down but we don't want to start charging for our events, we want to keep them free. It's about finding a balance." Martin Gillet, manager of OPA

"OPA are one of the most impressive play organisations I have come across. They are very active, and their events are always really well attended. Funding is dwindling but they are doing really good work with what they have got." Wendy Russell, senior lecturer in play, University of Gloucester

Children's Centres supporting dads to develop their children's learning

There was reluctance by fathers to engage in Children's Centres following their first wave introduction in 2004, resulting in low uptake by men. Men perceived these spaces to be overly feminised and organised around the needs of mothers. Fathers felt stigmatised by settings that only targeted hard to reach families and did not attempt to include them as a collective group. As OCC Children's Centre managers have become more aware of the research that positive father-child interactions improve the outcomes of families they have realised the importance of championing a 'whole family approach' in their settings. Centre's began to encourage male carers to access dads play sessions. Since 2008, OCC reach figures of fathers with an under 5 year old have been increasing year on year. Following a 2nd wave of centres being introduced, settings moved towards combining open access and targeted provision and attempts were made to engage all types of fathers. This saw an increase in the employment of designated Dads workers who started to deliver additional services just for men in a gender-differentiated manner. This led to a rapid increase in the reach of fathers accessing Children's Centres in Oxfordshire. By 2015 most of the 44 Children's centres in the county were organising play sessions just for dads, with Saturdads proving the most popular. Most of the 44 centres have now doubled their reach of fathers in their catchment since 2008 and dads stay and play sessions have been mainstreamed across the county.

Note - For further evidence of Dads stay and plays see separate case studies on Dads groups.



'Me and My Dad' - This weekly stay and play session for male carers at Grandpont Children's Centre has been running for the last 7 years. It attracts stay at home dads, BME dads, young dads and separated dads. The session provides dads and children with EYFS learning activities, song and story times, a venue for contact visits and support from the Dads worker. Children develop early attachments with their male carers, who support them with their speech and language and school readiness. As a Teaching school, Lead teachers provide session plans and children access funded childcare places in the outstanding rated Nursery school.

Between 2008 -2014 most of the 44 Children's centres doubled their reach of the total number of fathers with an under 5 year old living in their catchment area:

2008 the reach of all fathers with an under 5 year old by a centre peaked at around 20%
2014 the reach of all fathers with an under 5 year old by a centre peaked at around 40%

Feedback from fathers living with or separated from their children has been positive about open access dads stay and plays at Children's Centres. Fathers appreciate these sessions because:

- Sessions are offered to men at times they can access such as twilight or weekend times and they are open to all types of fathers.
- Sessions are planned and delivered in a dad friendly manner, to male only groups in a non threatening environment by staff experienced in working with men.

- Sessions provide a gateway to men accessing other family services at the centre which they would not normally think to access or think they are only available for mothers, e.g ESOL classes, adult learning, weaning talks, First Aid training, baby massage etc.
- Sessions provide fathers with well organised EYFS activities and encourage men to contribute to their children's learning, such as reading with them every day and developing early attachments.
- Session workers acknowledge fathers like to play in more practical, physical ways with their children and workers provide activities such as den making, outdoor play, messy play, junk modelling etc.
- Sessions promote fatherhood as a positive resource for children's development and this provides a counterpoint for some men involved in services that are required to work with fathers that pose a risk to their families, such as social care.
- Sessions provide a venue for contact visits for separated fathers to have quality play time with their children they otherwise would not have access to.

"I attend the Saturdads sessions every fortnight and greatly look forward to playing with my daughter during the contact visits at the Children's Centre." Separated Bengali male carer.

"It's great to come to the Saturdads sessions at the weekend. I get to spend quality time with my daughter, there are always good play ideas to do. It also helps me to meet other dads who use the centre. It's nice to have a friendly male environment where dads can develop their parenting skills."
Male carer.

"Our Saturdads sessions are instrumental in developing our dads work and providing a whole family approach. It provides men an opportunity to have inspiring play with their children, feel included at the centre and have access to invited professionals like Health visitors, OFIS, MIND workers, benefit advisors etc at weekend times. Contact visits happen at these sessions and it gives myself the chance to meet and engage these hard to reach dads and signpost them to parenting programmes. Because its open access and essentially a 'clustered' service we get a great mix of new dads, full time carer dads, dads with babies, BME dads, dads on C.P plans from all over the city. I believe the success of Saturdads sessions have helped to promote Children's Centres and the image of OCC as father-inclusive. Without dads sessions you would see an end to early intervention with male carers in the county" OCC Dads worker.



Working with fathers in greatest need

In 2012, the DfE's revised core purpose emphasised that services were required to identify, reach and help those families 'in greatest need of support'. Whilst this has been useful in focussing resources on hard to reach families, this has resulted in a move towards more targeted provision. This put at risk the positive role Children's Centres play in facilitating the re-negotiation of gender roles, celebrating the benefits of fatherhood and encouraging more men to play an active role in their children's lives and their development of learning. Consequently, average county percentage figures of fathers reached with an under 5 year old peaked in 2014 at 26.36% only to drop for the first time ever in 2015 to 24.08%. This report has established that as resources, time and budgets have reduced, Dads workers in the county are now expected to focus on managing specific men's risky behaviours. Dads workers are instructed to participate in more case loads of

Child Protection cases, spend less time increasing their reach of all types of fathers at stay and plays and replace their father-inclusive practice with generic outreach work. The author is aware that senior service managers do consider a whole family approach to be necessary when managing vulnerable men as a risk and ensuring the safeguarding of children. As demands on local authority budgets increased there was increasing pressure for services to no longer offer a whole family approach to all universal fathers and no longer support all men to be a resource to their children's learning and development. The author raised this recent drop in the reach figures of all fathers with an under 5 year old with OCC strategic leads. They stated that the new service model will offset reductions in reach of all fathers by maintaining some universal access and by mainstreaming the father-inclusive agenda through a Think family approach so father-inclusive practice becomes everyone's agenda.

Dads sessions can meet OCC's agenda for its new service model in 2017

In 2016, the agenda to celebrate fathers as a resource to their children came under further threat as OCC was obliged to make further budget cuts. Due to the budget reductions OCC is reducing early intervention staff levels and this could mean a reductions in the local authorities capacity to deliver fathers work. However, OCC strategic leads have committed to a Think Families approach which includes the importance of embedding father-inclusive practices within this proposed new service model. The

rationale for fathers being included in OCC's new family service at open access stay and play sessions would be that it meets the local authorities current agenda to promote Think Families:

- Dad play sessions are a popular gender-differentiated service and they demonstrate that OCC is meeting its current KPI to be inclusive of male carers as a target group and have a whole family approach.
- Estart reach data demonstrates that Dad play sessions are popular with all types of male carers, including 'hard to reach' dads who otherwise would be deterred from visiting overly feminised family centres completely. Dad play sessions meet OCC's agenda to maintain its reach of targeted carers in its new family centres.
- Dad play sessions provide a venue for contact visits. This would meet OCC social care's obligation to supervise contact visits for fathers on C.P plans in order to deliver its statutory duty to safeguard children.
- Dad play sessions provide an opportunity for fathers to contribute to their children's learning that OCC leads want to encourage. These include children's early language development with reading and mark making, children's early attachments such as baby massage for dads and PEEPLE for dads parenting advice and play activities that develop children's school readiness.
- Dad play sessions enable workers to invite professionals to meet targeted male carers they would not otherwise have access to, such as health visitors, economic wellbeing officers, MIND workers etc. This would match OCC leads' agenda for a 0-19 year old integrated service.
- Dad play sessions enable outreach workers to meet, assess and signpost men to other services such as parenting programmes, perpetrator programmes, offer them 1:1 support and work with social workers with men on C.P and C.I.N plans. This would meet OCC leads' agenda to offer outreach work for the most vulnerable families, support parental mental health, reduce risk of neglect and abusive behaviours and avoid children moving into social care involvement.



OXONDADS WEBSITE



Glen Scrivener is responsible for maintaining the Oxondads website. This is linked to a blog, twitter and facebook page and helps to raise the profile of fathers work in the county. The website is a valuable signposting tool for fathers seeking information about local services. It currently hosts the 'Thanks to Fathers Work' video campaign that enables dads to feedback their experiences of using fathers services.

Key findings

- ❖ OPF received a 3 year grant from the Wates Foundation to develop and launch Oxondads.
- ❖ The website was launched in 2011 with a successful fun day in Oxford.
- ❖ Oxfordshire County Council's Family Information Service gave practical support and linked users to Oxondads.
- ❖ The Oxondads worker visits Children's Centres to meet dads workers and fathers and provides promotional booklets.
- ❖ The website, blog, twitter and facebook page have promoted father inclusive events & services across the county for 4 years.
- ❖ Fathers are currently using the website to share positive video feedback about their experiences of fathers work in the county.
- ❖ The website now requires additional funding.

Background

In 2011 Oxfordshire Parenting Forum received funding from the Wates Foundation to promote fathers work in Oxfordshire. OPF had promoted fathers work previously through a website it identified that there wasn't a local point of reference on the web for fathers to view online. It was felt this service needed to be refreshed and relaunched. With the funding in place and the practical assistance of Oxfordshire Family Information Service, the structure and content of the site started to come together and the oxondads.co.uk website was developed and relaunched in September of that year.

Website launch

The launch of the website took place in the city centre of Oxford. This involved taking over Bonn Square for an afternoon of live music, face painting, water play activities and a penalty shootout with Oxford United Football Club. Promotional merchandise such as Oxondads T-shirts, balloons & information booklets were given to families.



Next steps for Oxfordshire

- Like all websites, Oxondads needs constant updating and refreshing with new content and activities that men can attend. This will need OCC's new service model to continue to offer universal services for fathers, such as Saturdads groups.
- Oxondads is promoted in various ways, such as booklets in Children's Centres and at organised family events across the county. If a new service model offers less family venues it will need to be more proactive in getting male carers to know about & visit the website.
- As visitor trends change, users are now spending less time viewing the local site and are using it as a gateway to gain information from linked national websites about fatherhood.
- OPF has used funding to employ a worker to maintain website content, evaluate its use and produce annual reports. This funding has now come to an end. Unless additional funding is found content will become outdated. Oxondads will need to find new funding streams after 2016.
- OCC managers may benefit from financially supporting the continuation of Oxondads. It has an established user base of local fathers, it has low operating costs and it can signpost fathers to OCC's new family service model when it is launched in 2017.

OPF Worker

Glen Scrivener is responsible for maintaining the website and blog. Glen has worked for OPF for the past 8 years as a Dads Development Worker. He is also an Early Years Practitioner at the Leys Children's Centre where he runs a regular Saturdads group and provides support for men attending the setting.

www.oxondads.co.uk

The website has details of upcoming 'Saturdads' groups, family events and 'things to do' across the county. It lists services such as parenting programmes and ante-natal and baby groups specifically for dads. It signposts men to local services such as mediation advice for separated dads. It also links to national websites related to fathers such as the Fatherhood Institute. The layout has a range of informative sections that give helpful advice for current and expectant dads:

- Becoming a dad
- Things to do
- Money Matters
- Your rights as a dad
- Health information
- Gallery



A photographic gallery is included to show the various fathers events that have been organised across the county.



www.oxondads.blogspot.co.uk, www.twitter.com/oxondads,
www.facebook.com

To run alongside the Oxondads website, there are the other social media applications of facebook, twitter and a blog. These give the opportunity of relaying relevant information and up-to-date news and events that the static website cannot do. The blog is the main means of providing news and publicity for fathers and Dads workers with updates to the blog every fortnight. Topics covered by these applications are very wide ranging, from “Steps of Child Development” to the “Movember Men’s Health campaign” and signposting to local dads events such as the “NCT 1st 1000 days Dad meetings”.



Oxondad’s Aims

- Be a key communication tool for fathers and workers in the county.
- Keep content topical for fathers and Dads workers so that use is regular.
- Develop a means of monitoring hits and receiving feedback.
- Develop capacity to link the website with blog, facebook and twitter options.
- Explore income generation possibilities for sustainability.



Web content, promotion, signposting & practitioner support

- OPF used funding to produce an information booklet that could run alongside the website. This lists the website address, provides website information and acts as a signposting tool.
- Glen also convenes the bi-monthly Fathers Champion Network meetings. FCN currently has over 60 members on its mailing list. This provides an opportunity to gather additional content for the Oxondads website from Dads Champions running dads sessions and services such as their Saturdads groups or a parenting programme for men.
- In return, Glen is able to get dads champions to promote Oxondads to the men they work with in each of their settings. This means that men who then visit the site are more likely to access ‘clustered’ services for dads that are not always available in their own locality.
- OPF use the funding for Glen to visit the different Dads groups & Saturdads groups that run at various times throughout the county. When he visits a group he gets to speak individually to dads and informs them about the Oxondads website. Statistics show after each visit the average number of visits to the site increases.
- Glen also gets to establish a connection with the Dads workers and lets them know about the FCN meetings. This acts as a useful gateway for practitioner support. Dads workers have gone on to attend these meetings and learnt practices of how best to work with men.
- As a tie-in with the website Glen produces a monthly feature on the blog about each Dads group that he visits which provides a good publicity shot for each group.



Annual reports 2012-2015

OPF has produced annual reports from 2012 to 2015 to demonstrate the volume and effectiveness of the website and the blog. In 2012, the facebook page had 49 members, twitter had 22 followers following 35 groups, Oxondads had 45 hits a week and the blog had 40 hits a week. In 2013, the average time spent by each visitor increased to almost 3 minutes and the pages viewed had also doubled, meaning that visitors were tending to look at the entire content of the website rather than just browsing single pages. The most frequently viewed page was "Being A Dad". The facebook page had 50 members and the twitter page had 34 followers, following 64 other similar Dads Groups and Parenting Organisations. The statistics for the blog showed that it has had just over 1000 page visits from when the page counter was originally added back in April 2012. In 2014, annual statistics for Oxondads.co.uk were taken from Google Analytics. These showed the use of the website and social media for the period of April 2013 up to March 2014:

Data Summary 2012-2015

The Oxon Dads Blog

Apr 2012 : 332 Page visits

Apr 2013 : 1365 Page visits

Apr 2014 : 4612 Page visits

Apr 2015 : 9114 Page visits

Oxon Dads on Twitter

Apr 2013 : Followers 34, following 65

Apr 2014 : Followers 115, following 189

Apr 2015 : Followers 145, following 209

Oxondads Facebook

Apr 2013 : 50 members

Apr 2014 : 54 members

Apr 2015 : 58 members

Sessions (visits) April 2013-March 2014	1766
Users	472
Pages views	3664
Pages viewed per session	2.07
Average session duration	3.01 mins
Bounce rate	47.73%
% of sessions by new users	25.82
% sessions by existing users	74.28%
Geographical location of users by 'cities'	
Oxford	1402 79.39%
London	114 6.46%
Northampton	16 .91%
Banbury	15 .85%
Milton Keynes	15 .85%

This data demonstrates that people visit for specific purposes rather than general browsing. 81.77% of users visited the home page alone. This may be caused by them using the home page to access the blog, which received 4612 visits during the year. The most frequently viewed page was the "Things To Do" page. This shows that the majority of visitors were using Oxondads as a portal for information on where to go with their families. Out of the total amount of site users 26% were new users. This shows that Oxondads was growing in popularity and that 74% of users were returning users to the service. It is important to note that nearly 80% of service users were from the Oxfordshire area. Hits to the website remained constant, while the blog generated a very significant increase in users by over 300%. The increase in the number of twitter followers was also substantial.



The Oxondads.co.uk website yearly progress report 2014-2015

Session visits 1465
Users 979
Pages views 2278
Pages viewed per session 1.55
Average session duration 1.04 mins
Bounce rate 71.4%
% of sessions by new users 65.7%
% sessions by existing users 34.3%

Geographical location of users

Oxford	555 = 37%
London	61 = 4.6%
Northampton	59 = 4%
Banbury	33 = 3.5%
USA	307 = 21%
Europe	273 = 19%

Summary of 2014-2015 results

- Overall visits are down by 15%
- Increase in users by over 100%
- Decrease in page visit, time on page, session duration & bounce rate (time on site)
- New Users have more than doubled.
- Wider dispersal of people viewing the site throughout the UK and even abroad.

Although the volume of people using the website decreased since 2014 the majority of users were new visitors. This proves that the site is still being sought out via search engines or social media. Visitors are not staying as long as they were last year. This could indicate that they are merely using the site as a spring board onto our other social media or links to the other recommended sites. Judging by the location demographic of visitors, there are a much greater number of people accessing the site from outside of the UK. The site may well be providing information on fatherhood that is not available in other countries.

Conclusions

Oxondads still has a significant presence on twitter, blogger and facebook. Each social media stream continues to increase, with the doubling of the page views of the blog. It currently averages over 1,000 hits each month from visitors. This is not only from Oxford and other parts of the UK, but also from the U.S.A and Australia. This is an indication that people are still using it as a source of up to date news and a point of reference for information relating to fatherhood.

Next Steps

- Oxondads will need to find additional funding streams now that OPF's role has changed and funding from the Wates Foundation has ended.
- Oxondads will need to provide funders with evidence that it is a low cost, effective way to signpost hard to reach fathers to family services.
- OCC managers may want to fund Oxondads to develop a whole family approach. This is because Oxondads could ensure all types of fathers across the county have open access to virtual online parenting support, information, signposting, forum and blog in addition to any universal sessions available at OCC's bricks and mortar Children and Family Centres in 2017.
- OCC may consider it to be more cost effective to financially support universal fathers through an online parenting service at a time when local authority budget cuts mean funding is being prioritised to the most vulnerable families.

"The (Oxondads) Blog has lots of interesting articles about being a Dad and I use it to find out what's going on in Oxford and where I can take my family." Dale 33, Oxford

"Before my daughter was born I didn't really know where to get advice about what to expect about being a dad. I found out about Oxondads.co.uk and it really helped with some of my worries and answered a few of my questions."
James 27, Oxford

DADS' HEALTH & WELLBEING



As an OPF Fathers' development worker, *Conroy Harris* worked with Oxford United Football Club and Oxfordshire MIND to set up a series of fathers' mental wellbeing sessions in Oxfordshire. This is a brief summary of this work and how it has led to further wellbeing work with men by the charity MIND.

Key findings

- ◆ OPF funded outreach work for a series of wellbeing pilots for dads in partnership with MIND and Oxford United FC.
- ◆ Sessions were attended by 20 dads and the pilot led to National Lottery funding for MIND to continue the programme.
- ◆ OPF worked with Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust to run a series of Men's Health Roadshows. This work may be worth revisiting with fathers.
- ◆ Health visitors have given dads healthy eating and smoking cessation advice at Saturdads groups.
- ◆ Children's Centres have worked closely with MIND on dads wellbeing, de-stress and reducing anxiety sessions.
- ◆ Grandpont Children's Centre runs Mindfulness and yoga evenings for dads. It has worked with OXPIP to help vulnerable fathers' develop their baby massage skills, parental mental wellbeing and child attachment issues.

What a goal!

In 2011 OPF funded Conroy Harris to develop work with fathers and their wellbeing. As the Dads worker at Blackbird Leys Children's centre, Conroy already had experience of working with fathers in an area of deprivation and with dads with complex needs such as mental health. A pilot project was launched with Oxford United Football Club and Oxfordshire Mind at the Kassam stadium. This was aimed at helping dads manage strong emotions, reduce stress and improve their fitness with the help of a professional football coach. The first fitness and wellbeing programme started on March 2011 and ran for five weeks. Free child care was made available at the Children's Centre during the sessions, so fathers could relax and focus on themselves. The Dads who completed the course also received free tickets to an Oxford United home game in the spring. A second programme was subsequently repeated with fathers in October and November, followed by a third programme which started in June 2012 led by MIND.

It's a game of two halves

The fathers who joined up got a chance to spend an hour and a half in the classroom each week looking at different ways to cope with stress and work with different emotions like anger. This involved practising basic cognitive behavioural therapy to help with low-level psychological problems like anxiety. The dads were also able to spend an hour with Oxford United trainers in the gym so that the pilot focussed on the mind and body together.

Rationale for a wellbeing pilot for fathers

■ OPF believe that children's outcomes are improved when carers' mental wellbeing is supported, carers develop a greater awareness of early child attachments and carers are supported to reduce their stress, anxiety or abusive behaviours.

- OPF Fathers' Champion Network wanted to offer male carers an external pilot service that could support their mental wellbeing, as fathers may not want to engage at early years settings such as Children's Centres predominantly set up around the needs of mothers.
- Fathers' Champions were aware men often had difficulty admitting they needed help with mental health issues and felt there was a need for a pilot programme that offered fathers support in away that appealed to their interests, such as football and was non threatening.

Men's Health Forum statistics on mental health and men (2014):

The MHF suggests that these statistics indicate that male emotional and psychological distress may sometimes emerge in ways that do not fit comfortably within conventional approaches to diagnosis. They also show that men may be more likely to lack some of the known precursors of good mental health, such as a positive engagement with education or the emotional support of friends and family.



- Nearly four in five suicides (78%) are by men and is the biggest cause of death for men under 35.
- At any one time, one in eight men (12.5%) are diagnosed with a common mental disorder (e.g. depression, anxiety, phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder and panic disorder).
- Men are nearly 50% more likely than women to be detained and treated compulsorily as psychiatric inpatients.
- Men are three times as likely to report frequent drug use than women (4.2% and 1.4% respectively) and more than two thirds of drug-related deaths occur in men.
- Men are nearly three times more likely than women to become alcohol dependent (8.7% of men are alcohol dependent compared to 3.3% of women).
- Men make up 95% of the prison population. 72% of male prisoners suffer from two or more mental disorders.
- Men have measurably lower access to the social support of friends, relatives and community.

A picture begins to emerge of a potentially sizeable group of men who cope less well than they might:

- ◆ These men may fail to recognise or act on warning signs, and may be unable or unwilling to seek help from support services.
- ◆ At the further end of the spectrum they may rely on unwise, unsustainable self-management strategies that are damaging not only to themselves but also to those around them.
- ◆ Such a picture would broadly parallel what is already known about men's poorer physical health.

Rationale for working with Oxfordshire MIND & Oxford United F.C

Conroy was keen to work with Oxfordshire MIND due to their experience in working with local men with mental health needs and their previous work visiting Children's Centres, meeting families and promoting wellbeing. Conroy was aware that Oxford United F.C have a good track record of providing outreach activities at local family community events and Play Days that have been attended by families and male carers. The club is supportive of work that promotes men's physical and mental wellbeing.



Feedback from the pilot programme

"The extent to which the image of the tough, resilient male who hides emotion, the notion that big boys don't cry, is hardwired in our society prevents many men from seeking help when they need it. We know that physical exercise boosts self-esteem and combats low mood, and we hope that this, coupled with the wellbeing sessions and the fantastic opportunity to engage with our local football club, will be a winning formula for men in need of support." Stuart Reid, the head of services at Oxfordshire MIND

"Because they don't seek help early for their emotional issues men will spend more time at the harder end of mental health. We need to give new parents, including fathers, the skills to help them deal with stress better" Conroy Harris, Dads Support Worker

"We're delighted to be involved with Oxfordshire Mind and keen to work together to create a healthier and more positive Oxfordshire." Kelvin Thomas, Oxford United chairman

Outcomes from the pilot

The first two courses which were run were attended by 20 fathers. Following this MIND led a third pilot programme in 2012. MIND were subsequently awarded Lottery funding in 2013-2014 to make the pilot a permanent programme. OPF's contribution to the project was through Conroy providing outreach, publicity and recruitment, telephone support and motivation between sessions. OPF gained satisfaction from having facilitated the early stages of development, helping the programme to become sustainable and it ultimately gaining national funding to enable more men to access this support.

Pilot legacy

In the autumn of 2015 Oxfordshire MIND began a similar programme to support men with their wellbeing. A celebration event on 29th February 2016 was attended by many of the 28 Eritrean young men from Refugee Resource who had participated in this Football Fitness and Wellbeing course. The young men learnt about CBT techniques with MIND Wellbeing Workers and underwent football and fitness coaching with an Oxford United coach over a 10 week course programme.



Fathers wellbeing sessions at Grandpont Children's centre

The Dads worker at Grandpont Children's centre has worked with MIND since 2012 to deliver a series of wellbeing sessions for fathers in order to develop parental mental health. This started when a local dad and MIND worker, offered to run a de-stress session for dads. 10 fathers participated in the relaxation techniques and were signposting to Talking Space.

The MIND worker, trained in delivering Mindfulness, then supported a core group of 6 fathers who have gone on to attend regular bi-monthly wellbeing sessions at the centre. These 'Dad

Club' twilight sessions are based around an outdoor fire pit, a 45 minute Mindfulness session and a check out about the men's current wellbeing. This led to the Children's Centre working with several men on their mental health needs and signposting them to MIND, Talking Space, their G.P and in 1 case the Complex Needs Team.

The Children's Centre has also worked with OXPIP on developing fathers' early attachments with their children through baby massage sessions. These sessions have been attended by men on probation and Child Protection plans, with various needs such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and a personality disorder. The men gave consent for this work to be filmed to help OXPIP workers get training development. The Dads worker also invited Tatty Bumpkin to run a series of Yoga sessions with male carers and their children at Saturdads sessions to promote physical exercise and early attachments. Since 2014, the Dads worker has helped to promote a weekly evening 5 a side football session at Mansfield road astro pitch for local dads with young children. This has involved around 50 dads in the last 2 years.



Men's Health Roadshows

In 2010 Rose Hill and Littlemore Children's Centre initiated a Men's Health Workshop based next the centre so it could have direct contact with male carers already visiting with their children. The Dads worker encouraged fathers to attend and this proved a success. The event gave the fathers immediate access to medical and mental health services, including taking blood pressure, weighing and measuring, prostate advice and one-to-one information and confidential advice. OPF's Conroy Harris revisited this idea in 2012 by planning a Men's Health 'Roadshow' to visit numerous Children's Centres in the city and their popular Saturdads groups. This was organised alongside Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, Oxfordshire MIND and Dads Workers. This project did not come about as it was not possible to secure a budget for this. OCC may want to consider funding a similar initiative when it launches its new Children's and Family Centres in 2017.

Next Steps

There appears to be the practical issue of health professionals working hours to meet carers in the week. Children's Centre staff work weekends in order to outreach men as they are aware this is the most popular time when fathers access family services. Midwives currently do attend weekend Parent Craft pre-birth sessions for mothers and partners on Saturdays. Health visitors have previously volunteered to meet with fathers at weekend Saturdads stay and plays and these have been successful in providing men with advice on healthy eating, smoking cessation, exercise and wellbeing. Successful work with fathers relies on agencies including the whole family and meeting the needs of fathers. The report found that family service models are still designed predominantly to support the needs of the main carer, often the mother. The report is aware that OCC strategic leads want to promote parental mental health and children's early attachments with both carers and have a whole family approach. To do this, OCC's new service model may want to provide fathers with weekend open access and health professionals may want to use this opportunity to meet fathers at these sessions. By putting these two simple action points in place service managers can ensure they are offering a whole family approach and promoting the benefits of male carers' health and wellbeing in order to improve children's outcomes.

THE DADS TEST



Roger Olley MBE has been a leading UK practitioner and expert in fatherhood for the last two decades. In 2014 he provided Oxfordshire Parenting Forum an evaluation tool to enable settings in Oxfordshire to audit their father-inclusive practice. This is a summary of the findings.

Key findings

- ◆ Roger Olley MBE provided OPF with a 'Dads Test' tool to enable settings to audit father-inclusive practice.
- ◆ OPF offered the 'Dads Test' to OCC Children's centres & Early Intervention Hubs. This process was supported by OCC area managers who requested all managers took part. Further requests were made in OCC's monthly newsletter to settings.
- ◆ OPF arranged for a Dads worker to visit settings, County lead meetings and provided practitioner support.
- ◆ 9 centres organised team meetings, completed audits and gave results to OPF. This equates to 18% of OCC family settings completing audits and 72% not completing audits.
- ◆ An OCC area manager invited the OPF worker to a teenage pregnancy strategy group to see how a health dads test could help their multi agency work with young fathers.
- ◆ OCC Centres that completed an audit stated it was a useful reflection process to gain more outcomes with fathers and review staff procedures.

Roger Olley MBE

Roger has worked as an Including Men specialist since 2001 and led the nationally recognised 'Fathers Plus' service for over ten years. His work enabled Fathers Plus to move from a locally focused project in the North East to a service which has influenced and informed central government, childcare and social care agencies in the UK, Ireland and internationally on the issue of father and male inclusion. Roger co-authored the nationally accredited 'Developing Men Friendly Organisations' training. He has developed and delivered multi agency training on the issue of male inclusion for agencies and organisations such as Schools, Sure Starts, prisons, and social care agencies across the country. Roger has a proven track record of assisting agencies and organisations to increase male participation in their services. Roger was awarded the MBE for 'services to families' in 2011.



Engaging fathers in family services

Roger recognised that many services for 'families' actually only engage with mothers yet research shows children do best when both parents are actively involved in looking after their children and their education. In 2012, Roger co-authored the book 'Engaging Fathers in the Early Years', which sets out the need for a family services to reflect on its father-inclusive practice. He states that for an organisation to work effectively with men it first needs to use a self assessment tool, such as the 'Dads Test', to audit its father-inclusive practice.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- A cultural shift is needed to ensure early years settings audit their services for being father-inclusive.
- Settings may continue to believe institutionalised barriers to fathers work are too big to change by their own inclusive practice if all settings and agencies do not review their service delivery with men.
- OCC managers may want to use a Dads Test audit when it launches its new integrated family service model in 2017. It can then be confident it is delivering a whole family approach from the start.
- OCC may want to encourage service managers in social care and health to audit their father-inclusive practice. This process would help integrate the services. It will require support from senior managers in these services.
- Senior managers may want to consider their response if an audit process highlights service gaps and the need for additional father-inclusive training for their workforce. This process will require managers to balance the pros and cons of improving outcomes for families and safeguarding children versus short term additional costs.
- OCC strategic leads may need to provide an incentive and rationale for managers to complete an audit to include more fathers in their services. This could include showing how other local authorities that are already using father-inclusive audits in their services are benefitting from having a whole family approach.
- OCC strategic leads may want to follow up Dads Tests to see this is leading to greater father-inclusive practice and support staff, e.g staff flexibility so workers feel able to deliver dad friendly interventions in evening and weekend times.

The 'Dads Test'

In 2014, Oxfordshire Parenting Forum contacted Roger to discuss ways that he could provide support for local settings to become father-inclusive. Roger suggested OPF could create a version of his 'Dads Test' to enable settings to do a self-assessment audit of their practice. OPF created a version of the 'Dads Test' that lists 25 father-inclusive questions, which when individually scored provides a total out of 100. OPF sent the assessment tool to all 44 Children's centres and 7 Hubs in Oxfordshire.

Benefits to settings & the Local authority

OPF provided settings with practitioner support from a trained Dads worker. He explained the benefits that OCC settings would get if they completed the audit and then delivered more father-inclusive practice:

- Settings get to meet UK legal obligations to include men as equally as women in services.
- Local authority meets its statutory requirement to safeguard children. It avoids service gaps for men, identified as risk factors in UK Serious Case Reviews.
- Settings get to become more aware of the benefits to families by including male carers in services, get to increase outcomes for the whole family and meet OCC's Key Performance Indicators to include men.
- The image of settings and the Local authority are improved as they get to be judged by OFSTED as being effective practitioners in targeting vulnerable male carers.
- Settings and the Local Authority get to demonstrate value for money by having their services used by the whole family rather than just a single carer.
- Settings avoid staff burn out of individual workers assigned to fathers work by embedding inclusive practice in the whole outreach team and institution.
- Settings see the benefit of 'gendered' services, such as all male parenting programmes, which are proven to be better attended, cost effective and save OCC money.
- Family centres, social care and health services work better when they hold a common agenda that men are both a resource and a reduced risk to their children.

Promotional campaign

- All 44 Children's centres and 7 Early Intervention Hub managers received a self assessment form.
- Centre managers were encouraged to set up a team meeting to complete an audit with their team within the 3 month deadline of March 2014.
- OPF provided a Dads worker to visit individual settings who offered practitioner support, explained the benefits of completing the audit and provided tips for engaging male carers.
- Worker attended City & County Lead Managers meetings and spoke with centre and Area managers, he attended and spoke at the county's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy to Health, Social care and Hub workers and attended Fathers Champion Network meeting and spoke with a range of Dads Champions to promote the campaign.
- The worker requested that Area managers send the form again to all OCC centre managers with a reminder to complete it in time.
- The worker requested that OCC's monthly Quickplace newsletter, which goes to all centre managers, provided the form and requested another reminder for settings to complete it.
- The worker did final follow up emails and phone calls to managers he knew were involved in completing audits to gather the results and present the findings.

Of the 51 settings that received the 'Dads Test', 9 completed and returned it to OPF

The ACE centre, Chipping Norton - an example of a completed audit

The Ace Centre is an 'outstanding' Ofsted inspected Children's centre. It employs a Dads worker who runs stay and plays for fathers and provides 1:1 outreach support for vulnerable men. The centre completed a self assessment audit of its father-inclusive practice in March 2014. Liz Hutchings, the Family Support manager, was fully involved in the process. She scored the centre highly for its father-inclusive practice, with 92 out of a possible 100. By completing the audit, the manager was able to provide evidence of its current inclusive practice, a case study of effective work with a vulnerable male carer and the next steps needed to work with more targeted men.



Case Study:

"D is a single dad who lives with his son C. He had recently moved there from Witney to a small village in West Oxfordshire. Moving from Witney where he had a support system had left him feeling isolated and low. D was referred to the ACE Centre by the Health Visitor, for some 1 to 1 support. Initially this work was carried out by the Senior Outreach Worker, but she felt that its success would be better supported by D having a male support worker, so his case was allocated to our Dad's worker. From the end of last year D began to engage with the Dad's worker and was able to begin to address some issues around C's attendance at pre-school, which had been irregular. C's lack of attendance seemed to be related to D's low mood and lack of motivation. Building up a relationship of trust with the Dads worker enabled D to engage with services. D was able to realise that his low moods were a sign of his depression returning. D was signposted to MIND and also completed an Outcome Star which highlighted his poor sense of wellbeing being related to depression. As a result of this intervention, D was encouraged to go to his GP and has since been prescribed anti-depressants. He has now turned the corner and is feeling better and is able to make sure that C attends pre-school regularly. D has now got a job as a chef and is able to organise his life, which has had a huge impact on C who goes to school regularly and sees his Mum every week end."

Impact on the family:

- D was able to bring structure into his life. He had been finding it hard to get out of the house. He was initially unable to relate this to his depression and poor wellbeing.
- For C this meant that he was now attending pre-school regularly, benefiting from socialising with other children and he was also enjoying the continuity of seeing his Mum regularly.
- D felt less isolated, this raised his self-esteem and he was able to secure a job as a chef.

Learning at the centre:

- We were able to see the importance of meeting the needs of the client. This was evident when D engaged with J our Dads worker.
- We acknowledged that it is important to be able allocate a male client to a male worker if that is preferred.
- We were able to see how the team is strengthened by having a designated Dads worker.
- We have shared different ways of working within the team, working with the Dads worker has enabled us to engage more profoundly with families and meet their individual needs.

Developing father-inclusive practice, meeting service gaps and next steps:

The Dad's Test helped the centre to realise it did not have an equal number of male carers as female carers registered at the setting and needed to register more male carers. As mothers are often the 'gateway' to the whole family accessing services, staff needed to learn how to sensitively ask mothers about a father's details, contact fathers directly to assess their needs and offer services to fathers as they already do with female carers.

"With more instances of domestic violence coming up we are being asked to work with fathers who need to understand the effects of domestic abuse on the child. It would be good to be able to access training around this area for our Dads worker." Liz Hutchings



"We have used data recently when setting up two community stay and plays in our most deprived SOA Chipping Norton 8. We have been able to see that there are more dad's in this SOA who are not in work. At the moment there are up to 15 Dads attending either the Town Hall joint venture with the food bank or the stay and play at the football club. Knowing that there were dads in this SOA that needed support has enabled us to think outside the box, to attract them in.

This group also included some Traveller dads, who would not come to the centre. I do think it is important to have a male Dads worker." Liz Hutchings, Family Support Manager, ACE

ACE Centre Dads Test scores and comments

The 'Dads Test' - A self assessment tool for settings to be father-inclusive

Name of Children's centre and date completed: ACE Centre, March 2014



Rate each statement on a scale of 1 - 4 using the following scale:

1 - Haven't thought about this

2 - We've started to think about this

3 - We have made some progress on this

4 - We have successfully completed this

	Statement	Rate?	Evidence to match rating?	Comments/next steps to achieve outcomes?
1	A needs assessment has been completed in order to plan an ongoing monthly programme of services for fathers at the Centre.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed with Dads using the centre Discussed with HV's Already had a weekly Dad's group and the plan was to run a week day group at tea-time The importance of using our local knowledge in order to target fathers in our SOA's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mail shot to all Fathers registered, to advise them of groups available Outreach to our most vulnerable fathers to invite them to tea-time session and work carried out at Football Club
2	The centre has a clear 'plan' of their work with fathers and have produced a 'policy statement' for all staff, senior managers and fathers at the settings to refer back to and 'buy into'.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy statement written to be taken to Governors to be ratified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratified by Governors To be taken to all staff meetings so staff are aware of the policy and the ACE Centre way of working with all Dads/Grandfathers
3	Men/Fathers in your community view the organisation as a place they can come to for assistance and mutual support and do not feel it overly feminized.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ante-natal evening groups encouraging Dads to be involved from the beginning Male outreach worker Travellers group working with Dads on the site as well as the Mums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work on inclusive practice, this is a continual on-going process Continue to find venues that are 'male' inclusive i.e. Football club, community play sessions in our SOA's
4	The message is given to staff and to fathers that their role as active parents is critical to their children's development. Senior managers have shared research with staff that demonstrates improved outcomes for children from positive interactions with fathers (e.g. The Fatherhood Institute) Staff are confident in promoting the message of men as a 'resource'.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future training sessions within the Teaching Centre role. This will include the Pre-schools and other settings in our reach area, so Fathers can be included from the wider areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to extend training and to give staff confidence to work with Fathers
5	The data of fathers/male carers 'reached' and using your centre is routinely monitored. This includes telephone contacts, service requests, drop off of children and involvement in activities. This data is used as the basis of planning future services for fathers.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have developed a flyer which we will be sent or given to fathers and also to give to male carers within the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep on looking at data so that we can monitor this against our baseline targets

6	Before delivering any new family service, senior managers and staff routinely ask themselves, "How can we also make this new service benefit fathers" and "How can we adapt it to make it father inclusive in order to have the impact we want?" [e.g. timings, staffing, approach]	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We offer a varied programme with flexible timing so we can meet the demands of all parents. We are inclusive in our approach to all parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to ask the staff if they are including Fathers and do we know this child's father. (Key Workers) Have we sent them a flyer to invite them to the centre?
7	Contact information/written announcements/newsletters etc are sent to fathers, regardless of their marital status or living arrangements and non resident carers are supported to engage in services with their child at the Centre.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saturday group is set up with the needs of non-resident fathers and the tea time group does the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flyers to continue to be sent to all male service users
8	Individual assessments are carried out by staff with men and staff are trained in using tools such as the Family Star, Solution based questions or motivational interviewing to do this. Outcomes with fathers are tracked.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff trained have good knowledge of all tools and interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome star is being tracked for all parents We will continue to focus on male carers when data collecting
9	All letters, posters and leaflets 'promoting' your services are designed with fathers as well as mothers in mind and the Centre uses positive and diverse imagery of fatherhood.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a leaflet and do produce all our leaflets etc. with diversity and inclusion in as paramount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with our inclusive practice
10	The ability to provide services to men/fathers is included in 'performance reviews' of all key staff and additional support is shown to be provided by senior managers if required.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to work with staff to include support and discussion on working with Fathers, on all performance reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded in performance reviews
11	The budget for work with fathers/ male carers at the Centre is clearly identified, consistent and ongoing and funding for this work has been clarified by the Local Authority via its KPI's and budget announcements.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is clearly identified via the employment of a male 'Dads' worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work towards keeping this within a diminishing budget
12	Programme hours are scheduled to accommodate the time constraints of working men/fathers and the Centre has employed staff who are willing to work these times.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is seen in weekly Dads group and teatime group, staff are very flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good package of supervision in order to support workers to be able to be flexible and responsive workers
13	All staff has received training to enable them to work with men in general and on fatherhood specifically. This includes training to work with target groups of men. If this is not available, senior managers have feedback this 'gap' to the local authority and requested specialist training.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work within the teaching centre to promote this work in our whole geographical area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to do this.

14	The Centre is able to deliver 'gender differentiated' services for men including male only services so it may meet the needs of fathers and achieve greater impact, (e.g. dad friendly parenting skills).	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work to provide services for males via ante-natal evening courses and parenting evening courses in order to encourage the take up of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantly audit services to provide male friendly well-resourced services
15	Staff believe that fathers are equally as capable as mothers to be positive care givers and they have been given an opportunity to reflect on their personal attitudes to gender, fatherhood, equality and inclusion.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working as an inclusive service has enabled staff to think and reflect on own personal values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflective practise is encouraged throughout the service to enable us to work to provide services that are reactive and responsive to family's needs
16	Staff time and resources have been allocated for 'outreach' work to all types of men/fathers, including young, workless, separated, BME. Outreach workers are able to deliver one to one support for male carers with complex needs or signpost on to appropriate services.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Male worker has a designated hours for outreach and has just finished an outreach course and has now got outreach cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to grow the outreach work within the centre
17	Staff at the Centre have supported other services and practitioners to become more father inclusive and will challenge them when necessary.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We support other settings within the Teaching Centre to increase work with Fathers and Male carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the work of the Teachings Centre
18	The centre has an equal number of mothers and fathers/male carers registered on the database and ensure completed registration forms contain both carers' details whether they are a resident or non resident carer of their child.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't have equal registrations of male to female 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will work to increase male registrations
19	All senior managers and staff are trained in the use of data and can demonstrate the 'impact' they are having on the positive outcomes for fathers, their children and their families.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The family Centre team are all trained to use Estart but we would ask whether it is a system which is totally fit for purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to use Estart and our own bespoke data to enable us to interrogate data to demonstrate impact and outcomes, both positive and negative so we can provide services which are meaningful and timely
20	To identify men and their needs, staff use the 3 magic questions, "Is there a dad in the family", "How is dad doing", "How can we help dad to be more of a resource and less of a risk to mum & the child?"	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar question are used that enable us to unpick family dynamics and create a clear picture of the family to ensure we have all significant carers registered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will build up pictures of families

21	All first time fathers are contacted and have their needs assessed, following the completion of the 'blue slips' by Health professionals. This is required by the Healthy Child Programme. This info is then used to ensure postnatal men attend the Centre.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of Fathers are contact via 'blue slips' This a large geographical area and not all of the blue slips come to the ACE. We now have a good relationship with midwives following a time when the Cotswold Maternity Unit's work was suspended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work to build this up
22	The Centre has demonstrated its commitment to 'championing' father-inclusive work by enabling staff to attend Oxfordshire Parenting Forum 'Fathers Champion Network' meetings, to benefit from sharing best practices.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We support our Dad's worker to attend meetings and training. So much of it is city centric which is not inclusive for those in the far flung areas of the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to support all meetings as well as providing a robust system of supervision in order to give workers individual support.
23	All staff and senior managers are aware of their obligations to provide a level of service for fathers outlined in the Equality Act, the Healthy Child Programme, National frameworks and the Children's and Families Act 2014.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is all part of working as an inclusive centre, recognising the needs of all of the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We work as an inclusive centre and celebrate all differences, ensuring that all fathers are welcomed and actively encourage to join in their child's journey
24	The Centre has demonstrated effective joint working with other agencies such as Early Intervention Hubs, Teenage strategy groups, Family Nurse Partnership, Connexions, MIND, Oxford Mediation Service, Social Care, Making Changes etc in order to signpost and support targeted male carers and improve their outcomes.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have worked in partnership with other professionals for a long time(Centre of Early Excellence a forerunner of integrated centres) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to form partnerships with an ever increasing group of professionals to support both our fathers and their children
25	The Centre has reflected on the effectiveness of its father-inclusive practice by arranging a team meeting and completing a 'Dads Test'. The Centre has identified any service gaps and next steps and all staff are aware of their roles & responsibilities to action to increase impact.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We worked on the above as a team. We will use this as evidence of a reflective approach to targeting work. We were able to put together a policy and will continue to build our work with fathers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue this work and will continue to plan and deliver services that are inclusive and meaningful.

Total possibility = 100

Actual total score = 92

Ratings and comments from completed audits

- The highest rating was 92 from 100, the lowest rating was 40 from 100 and the average rating for the 9 settings was 67 out of 100.
- The questions with the highest scores were *"Individual assessments are carried out by staff with men and staff are trained in using the Family Star tool."* and *"All staff are trained in the use of data and can demonstrate the impact they are having on the positive outcomes for fathers."*
- The questions with the lowest scores were *"The ability to provide services to fathers is included in performance reviews of all key staff and additional support is provided by senior managers if required."* and *"All first time fathers are contacted and have their needs assessed, following the completion of the 'blue slips' by Health professionals."*
- An Early Intervention Hub scored high in the specific areas of targeting vulnerable male carers but had a low total overall in its limited father-inclusive practice. Children's centres total scores were higher due to more father-inclusive practice with some 1:1 targeted work.
- The questions that settings gave most comments about needing support for their next steps were for more staff training in father-inclusive practice, producing a centre policy statement and enabling staff across the county to access the Fathers' Champions Network meetings.

Summary of completed audits

The general response by settings was that they felt they were able to deliver a good level of service to fathers with their existing early years offer and were motivated to improve this. Higher scores focussed on using Estart data to 'identify men and list outcomes', using the Family Star tool to 'assess their needs', deliver father-inclusive sessions such as Saturdads and signpost men to Parenting programmes to 'meet their needs'.

Comments demonstrated a growing area in post natal sessions being offered for fathers with babies. There was increased use of 1:1 'outreach support' offered by Dads workers to vulnerable men who were reluctant to engage with Social services.

A range of lower scores focussed on service gaps for fathers. Settings want to build data sharing protocols between OCC managers and health professionals in order to identify first time fathers. This includes ensuring 'blue slips', where possible, are always completed with both carers details to help early years workers identify new fathers. Workers want greater support to identify young fathers, who although successfully engaged by the Family Nurse Partnership programme are not always regular users of early years services or post natal dads sessions.

Settings struggled to embed father-inclusive practice into all staff performance reviews. Nearly all settings identified the need for greater training opportunities in fathers work and specifically in working with perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Settings want to access the Fathers' Champion Network meeting more to gain from practitioner support. Settings want greater support from senior managers to champion father-inclusive practice in order to achieve these next steps and offer a whole family approach.

Feedback about completed Dad Tests

"We want to encourage more fathers to attend the setting, obtain father's details and emails, log AEW outcomes for the father rather than just the mother, provide training in team meetings, survey the dads at the Army garrison and plan more activities that are father-inclusive."

Ambrosden Children's centre, Bicester

"The next steps are to introduce performance reviews with 'male carers as a target group' for all staff, to review non attendance of fathers to ensure services are still meeting the needs of fathers, gather the views of fathers to enable an action plan to be introduced, consider more training for staff and complete a policy statement on including fathers in our services."

Stephen Freeman Children's centre, Didcot

"I was pleased that I was able to offer Roger Olley's Dad Test resources free to all the Children's Centres and Hubs in Oxfordshire. I was able to attend county lead meetings, meet with centre managers and provide practitioner support to help centre staff complete their audit and reflect on their current inclusion of male carers in their settings. I was also invited to present a Health Dads Test at a Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group in the north of the county and this was well received by the OCC area manager and health professionals. It was positive that some managers did understand the benefits to families by embedding father-inclusive practice and they took seriously their legal and statutory obligations to include fathers in services. The fact that many centres were not able to complete and return an audit to OPF suggests some settings struggled to do this as a result of other competing demands. This may be explained by managers being unable to put time and resources into arranging team meetings and completing an audit even though they were supportive of fathers work. However, having spoken to current strategic leads in 2016 it appears there is support for a whole family approach to be adopted in its new service model in 2017. OCC leads have now stated they will include auditing as part of this process and will consider using the Dads Test within the new service model."

Martin Andrews, OPF Fathers' Champion

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'The best way for OCC to make sure its new integrated service of Children and Family Centres work effectively with the whole family is by ensuring its new settings complete a Dad Test Audit.'

A proposed new service model in 2017 will have a statutory duty to safeguard children. Staff in these new settings will need to know how to work effectively with hard to reach men on Child Protection and Child In Need plans to make sure they become a resource and not a risk to their children. This will require the delivery of father-inclusive engagement and outreach work. Managers can use an audit to reflect on their progress in using father-inclusive strategies. This can ensure centres avoid children moving into social care and increase their integrated work with other services. This can reduce the possibility of serious case reviews developing, seen in other local authorities who failed to include male carers in their family services or audited themselves.

Next steps

OCC, OSCB, social care and health services may want to reflect on how other local authorities and Safeguarding Boards nationally have benefitted from using self assessment audits in their family services in order to include more male carers:

London Social Services Team: Gavin Swann arranged for his team of social workers to reflect on their work with male carers and adapt their practices. His 2015 report shows a 45% increase in fathers attending core meetings, increases in men becoming a resource to their children, reductions in finances spent on Looked After Children and significant costs savings for the local authority.

Northern Lincolnshire & Goole Hospitals NHS

Foundation Trust maternity team: Following an audit the maternity team now actively encourages fathers to spend overnight stays with their partners from the labour, birth and discharge of their infants. The Trust gained a prestigious award from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on maternity services for new fathers.

Bath & North East Somerset Council: Senior strategic leads in the local authority and its Safeguarding board championed a year long campaign to include fathers across its entire services from 2012-2013. This led to social workers receiving father-inclusive training and increased work with fathers in schools that improved literacy levels of children.

DADS WORKER



Rafael Borja has been the Dads worker at Rose Hill & Littlemore Children's Centre for the last 9 years. He helped to develop the first wave of Saturdads sessions in the county. As part of the centre's outreach team he provides hard to reach fathers with 1:1 support. Rafa is a Fathers' Champion, helps with OPF dads events and attends Fathers' Champions Network meetings.

Key findings

- ◆ The Dads worker helped to develop the first wave of Saturdads sessions which were then replicated across the county.
- ◆ in 2010, the centre arranged a visit by Roger Olley to explain how to deliver fathers work.
- ◆ The centre organised a photographic exhibitions to represent local male carers.
- ◆ The Dads worker invited an artist in residence to work specifically with fathers and their children to promote learning & school readiness.
- ◆ The centre ran a garden project with dads to encourage participatory play, learning, healthy lifestyles and attachment with their carers.
- ◆ The Dads worker provides 1:1 support for hard to reach dads and the centre has a joined up outreach team.
- ◆ The centre has had positive feedback from fathers and local media about dads work.
- ◆ A whole family approach has become embedded into the centre's everyday practice.

Background

Rose Hill & Littlemore Children's Centre is a first wave Sure Start setting. It is located near the centre of Oxford and is well established in its local

community. It has a diverse range of families, including BME carers and serves an area of social deprivation. Through sustained dads work the centre has become a dad friendly space and is well attended by male carers.



Dads worker roles

Rafa's role has been instrumental in encouraging fathers to attend the Children's Centre and has championed father-inclusive practices. This includes the running of the successful Saturdads stay and play sessions for dads. Rafa has invited an artist in residence and used a dads garden project to extend children's learning and school readiness. He has worked with housing projects to support parental mental health needs and coordinated mediation sessions for families to support children during separation of their carers. As the centre's work has become more focussed on family support, Rafa's role has become more integrated into the outreach team's joint work to support the whole family. This has helped to stop children from escalating into social care and enabled fathers work to become embedded into the centre's everyday practice.

Saturdads

As a first wave Sure Start setting the centre has played an important role in leading on father-inclusive practice.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- In 2012, Child Benefit figures estimated there were 18,191 fathers of under 5 year old living in Oxfordshire and 480 living in Rose Hill's catchment. The success of dads work in Children's Centres has meant the county average of settings reaching dads of under 5's have increased annually from 15.9% in 2011 and almost doubled to 26.36% in 2014.
- This has meant that dads work has been getting more demanding. Since 2014 resources for services have been cut and dads work has become increasingly focussed on supporting men with more complex needs.
- The dads worker at Rose Hill & Littlemore is employed for 28 hours per week. But only has 7 hours per week to focus on fathers work. This work involves planning weekly dads sessions, providing family mediation for dads, supporting social workers, signposting fathers to agencies like social care, housing, G.P, perpetrator programme etc.
- Family support workers who primarily support mothers' needs as main carers are usually employed at least 16 hours a week.
- This could imply there is still a cultural shift required to ensure fathers work is taken as seriously as work with mothers, even though dads work improves children's outcomes.

Artist in Residence
Jon Lockhart




Rafa helped to establish the first wave of stay and play sessions for dads with weekly weekend Saturdads sessions just for fathers and their children. 603 different individuals have attended Rose Hill & Littlemore Children's centre's Saturdads sessions from 2009 to 2016. From 2009 many of the second wave Children's Centres went onto introduce their own successful Saturdads sessions with dads. By 2012, Oxfordshire Family Information Service listed 31 out of the 44 centres were offering regular Saturdads sessions. This initiative means every weekend, somewhere in the county, there is a free session available for fathers and their children to have quality time through access to early years play and learning activities. The development of Saturdads sessions across the county has been instrumental in mainstreaming fathers' involvement in family services, increasing the county's reach of fathers in family services and improving the positive image of the local authority inclusion of dads.

Activities and Learning

Rafa leads the session with Rose Hill Junior Youth Club Play Leader Jamie Bourton. The session takes place from 10.30am -1.30pm and are delivered in a fun, relaxed and enjoyable way for fathers to interact with their children. There are creche facilities, art activities, sports and free play opportunities which give dads the chance to bond with their children and other dads through playing and learning. Children have access to EYFS activities that help them develop their early communication and language.

Saturdads artist in residence

From 2006-2010 Jon Lockhart was the artist in residence at Rose Hill & Littlemore CC's Saturdads sessions as part of Modern Art Oxford's Art in Rose Hill programme. This led to an evolving series of workshops aimed at young children and their fathers, as well as a publication of the book *Manual Labour* and accompanying installation at MAO. The project started with the gallery's Outreach Art Trolley team leading



Oxfordshire's Children's Centre Dads Groups

Children's Centres throughout the county provide drop-in's and groups for Dads and their children to attend together. Most take place on a Saturday and are an opportunity for dads to get together to have fun, improve time with their children and share parenting tips and ideas. For more information visit www.oxccs.co.uk or telephone 08452 262636.

Unless otherwise stated these groups are run for dads/other male carers and their children aged from birth to 5 years old

Abingdon

South Abingdon Children's Centre • Contact: Mark Ginsburg
Saturdays 10.00 - 1.00 (term time)
South Abingdon Children's Centre, Caldecott Chase, Abingdon. OX14 5GZ
☎ 01235 555524
E: abingdonreception@pactcharity.org or mark.ginsburg@pactcharity.org

North Abingdon Children's Centre • Contact: Barry Northing/Kate Wilson
Every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month 10.00 - 12.00
Forest School for Dad's - Contact the centre for details of these sessions
Dunmore Primary School, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. OX14 1NR
☎ 01235 523481
E: Barry.Northing@oxfordshire.gov.uk Kate.Wilson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Bampton

Willow Tree Children's Centre • Contact: Cheryl Huntbach
Every 4th Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
For 2012: 11th February, 10th March, 21st April, 19th May, 16th June, 14th July, No group in August, 8th September, 6th October, 3rd November, 1st December
Willow Tree Children's Centre, Bowling Green Close, Bampton. OX18 2NU
☎ 07500 793897

creative art sessions at Saturdads. This led to fathers becoming more engaged at the centre, more proactive in promoting their children's learning and increased their attachment and school readiness. With funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation sessions then became more collaborative and ambitious as the artist began new works with input from the dads and children. This tapped into the men's sense of fun and identity. It included making family passports, using projectors, building mark making machines, creating biscuit towers, sculptures and installations.

"The role that dads and male carers have in the lives of their children is very important. Having a session like Saturdads, specifically for fathers within a Children's centre, a place often associated with women, encourages them to participate and create with their children. The specificity of the group also values the role that dads have in parenting. Men enjoy being together and the atmosphere at Saturdads is much more inclusive. I hope the legacy of this collaboration will be

that the men who attend the group will be able to spend time with their children creatively and be confident to support their development" Sylvia Dolan, Rose Hill & Littlemore CC Manager, 2010.



Saturdads outdoor learning and planting activities



Rafa was aware that men often respond to physical, practical and outdoor play. He has organised several outdoor trips with local male carers. This led to the Saturdads group wanting to create a kids and dads garden at the centre. This ongoing eco-literacy project has helped children develop their confidence and increase their attachment to their male carers as the garden has grown and blossomed. The centre provides plants for dads to take home and encourages the dads to continue participatory play and learning with their children using affordable resources.

Benefits of Saturdads for fathers, children, partners and services

- **Gateway for fathers** - Saturdads sessions solve the issue of fathers being reluctant to attend family centres that are predominantly organised around the needs of mothers and attended by mothers. They are an important 'open access' gateway for male carers to feel comfortable being with their children in early years settings which they would not otherwise visit or become a resource.
- **OCC meets its KPI's and increases its reach figures** - Saturdads sessions enable OCC to meet its current Key Performance Indicator to support dads as a target group. These sessions enable staff to register new dads, leading to a large increase in OCC's reach of fathers. County average for the reach of fathers with an under 5 year old in 2012 was 8.7%, by 2014 this had trebled to 26.5%.
- **Re-gendering of caring roles** - Saturdads are delivered to all male carer groups. This ensures the fathers get to share co-parenting duties with the mother. Workers, mothers and fathers develop expectations that male carers can contribute equally to the care giving of their children.
- **Improved outcomes for children** - Saturdads provide EYFS play and learning environments such as mark making, messy play, rhyme time and reading that encourage fathers to contribute to their children's early communication and language development and school readiness.
- **Early attachment** - Saturdads weekend sessions include postnatal sessions such as baby massage for dads and PEEP for dads that contribute to babies having improved early attachment to their fathers, who if working would not be able to access these services at Family centres in the week.
- **Reduces the need for social care involvement** - Saturdads provide a weekend venue for hard to reach men to engage with Dad Support Workers who can then offer them 1:1 support, while social workers only work Monday to Friday. This family support work helps to reduce risk, stops children from escalating into social care and supports male carers already on C.P and C.I.N.
- **A venue for weekend contact visits** - Saturdads weekend sessions take place in family orientated venues which enable male carers to have court ordered contact with their children. Without these sessions the local authority, solicitors, CAFCASS, probation, family courts and social workers would not be able to judge the parenting capacity of male carers, including those on C.P and C.I.N plans.
- **Whole family approach** - Saturdads sessions are often the first step in the use of father-inclusive strategies for including male carers in family services. Workers can then signpost men to other gender-orientated services such as parenting programmes or mental wellbeing services for men etc. This leads to centres embedding a whole family approach into their everyday practice.

Feedback about Saturdays

"The sessions are a good place to come with my kids because the guys here offer support and good activities. I've been coming here over a year and I really enjoy meeting all the other dads and building relationships with different people and my children. It's not often you get the chance to spend time with your children so this is great for that." Kevin Hennessy



"The main thing for me is that this place is open every Saturday. This is important as it becomes a routine for both myself and the children to get used to. We all look forward to coming here and bonding with our children in a relaxed and fun way. Activity wise, there is wet play, free play, messy play and creative play. Play is so good for a child's development. I feel it is important for a father to spend quality time with their children, take responsibility and take some pressure away from the mother. I can't thank Rafa and Jamie enough for their time and non-judgemental support. They have created a really relaxed environment. I can remember a time when services like this didn't exist and so I know how important it is to make the most of it." Brendan McCarthy



"It's a place where I can find out about work and training and meet with other dads that are in similar situations." Clint Moyo

"This provides a brilliant service for parents who otherwise may not get time to have this kind of social time with their children. Kids can be demanding so it's great to have this type of support network in place. The dads help out at times during the session and we all muck in together to create a community feel. The staff are supportive and share their knowledge of child care and child development. It's a great place to be."

Alladin Mark Seymour



"There is a massive need for these types of sessions within Oxford. It's a wonderful environment and I have met some truly amazing people over the past few years. I love to see people develop socially and we have created an inclusive place for this to happen." Rafa Borja

Housing, Men's Mental Health and Mediation

The centre's work with male carers also involves intensive 1:1 work and requires experienced family support skills. Rafa recently supported a local homeless father. The male carer finally found a house through the involvement of multiple agencies and with the support of local MP Andrew Smith. In the last five years, Rafa has organised many activities for fathers that involved joint working with other agencies. This has included work with Green square Housing. The organisation is able to provide independent living for people with learning disabilities, autism, or mental health problems. This has led to Rafa organising 6 Male Health Days that support local vulnerable male carers and improve parental mental health. The centre also arranges for Oxfordshire Family Mediation service to provide regular advice sessions with a trained mediation professional. These sessions offer separating families a free initial consultation and advice on whether they are eligible for Legal Aid. These sessions have helped to reduce conflict between carers and children's negative experiences of separation.



Family support case study and feedback

Feedback and images reproduced with the kind permission of the male carers:



"I'm Aaron, I started volunteering at Rose Hill & Littlemore Children's Centre in September 2010 just after my daughter Carys was born. Carys is my world. It's 23 years since I had a job, a long time, of drug addiction and homelessness. I've been clean now for 6 years. My life is Carys, specially after my dad passed away. I did a parenting course which made me aware of the complexity of parenting and understanding children. I've also done a Paediatric First Aid course Level 2, which I passed, and Food Hygiene. The Children's Centre has been a lifeline for me, I don't know where I'd be but for Carys and this place. My advisor at Maximus (Employment and Training) nagged me and said I was lazy - but actually I was looking after my daughter and step-daughter while their mother was in hospital for 2 months with her premature baby. And then yesterday off my own back I saw a vacancy for a cleaner and sent my email, went for an interview and got given a position as a cleaner - and I started the job. I was so happy I got a job, I had tears in my eyes. I texted my daughter (via her mother) 'Good news, your Daddy has got a job - and I can still pick you up from school'. I feel like a great weight has been taken off my shoulders." Male carer



"All the help I've been given by Rafa at the Family Centre has been beyond exceptional. He's taught me things I didn't know. He's helped me with everything I've asked him to so far. I've been treated more as a person rather than as a number, which I really do appreciate." Male carer with additional needs



"The key to successful work with hard to reach male carers is to first spend time befriending them. This means listening and assessing their needs, getting them to engage in activities that are father focussed where they can meet other men and be a resource to their children. Some men think 'I don't want to go there because they might make me sing songs or they'll tell me what to do', that's why we use a child-led play approach. It means that dads can simply follow their kids around and join in whatever the child wants to do. Many dads don't get much chance to spend time alone with their child without their partner around. Having one to one time with your baby or child is a great way to learn what your child enjoys doing and its best to start as early as possible. We model fatherhood, signpost men to services like parenting programmes and work on reducing any risky behaviours. The other key area is having good professional relationships with agencies like health visitors, mediation and Social workers, as the more sympathetic they are to dads work the more like they are to offer support to the whole family and not just mothers. At Rose Hill we have been fortunate to have had a very established team of workers for several years. The team understands each other's roles and the importance of joint working to ensure the best outcomes for families. We have been successful in developing our outreach work so it is focussed on how best to support the whole family, not just the mother, even when carers are separated." Rafael Borja, Fathers' Practitioner, 2015



Photographic exhibition of local male carers

Rafa worked with Rose Hill primary School on a photographic project. This involved talking with the children at the school about the importance of having a male role model and asking which male role models were positively involved in their lives. This led to a group of male carers giving their consent to a photographic exhibition that captured their everyday lives as fathers in the community. In some cases children chose male teachers as they did not have a male role model in their lives. This was displayed at the Old Fire Station Art Gallery in 2013 as part of events to celebrate male carers in Oxfordshire during annual Father's Day. The centre felt the project acknowledge the role of men as carers, gave a voice to the children and showed the centre's commitment to supporting fathers and the whole family in its services. Images reproduced with the kind permission of the male carers.



Rafa's top tips for including fathers in services

- Employ a Dads worker who can relate to and engage with hard to reach men, who can run dads sessions and champion dads work to the whole team.
- Avoid having 'bolted on' dads work and Dads worker burn out, by ensuring the whole team buy into the benefits of fathers work improving children's outcomes.
- Offer weekend stay and play sessions to enable dads to improve their children's learning and provide fathers a venue for contact visits with their children.
- Provide 1:1 support and services for fathers for their mental health needs, abusive behaviours and substance misuse and signpost separated dads to mediation support.
- Assess father's needs, set them challenges and goals so they can aspire to be better dads and become a resource to their children.
- Be aware that services traditionally are not built around the need's of men, work with health visitors and social workers so they can support men's needs.
- Ensure the centre manager champions a whole family approach and builds father-inclusive practice into every day practice by the whole outreach team.

DADS' GROUPS



Carla Preen, the senior Dads worker at Cuddlesdon Corner Children's Centre explains how they relaunched their stay and play sessions for dads. This has led to an increase in fathers and children attending the Centre. It also led to an increase in its outreach work with dads and the development of the Centre's father inclusive practices.

Key findings

- ◆ The Centre delivered weekend and weekly dad sessions to target both vulnerable and universal dads.
- ◆ Workers were motivated by the need to increase their reach of local dads and the improvement of outcomes for children.
- ◆ Staff reflected on previous dads work and what could be done differently.
- ◆ Staff committed time and resources to redesign, promote and deliver sessions aimed specifically at dads and their children.
- ◆ This led to an increase in the attendance of dads and their children at both weekend and weekly sessions during the 6 month relaunch.
- ◆ This led to an increase in the outreach work with targeted dads and their children at the weekly sessions and referrals to specialist support.

Relaunch

Cuddlesdon Corner Children's Centre, based in Blackbird Leys, relaunched its Dads groups in October 2014 after a 9 month closure.



Research and consultation took place in the time in which the group was closed and the findings of this research showed that dads in the area wanted sessions in the week as well as weekends. After looking closely at the already busy programme, it was decided that reducing the existing stay & play session on a Tuesday was the best solution to free up time. Workers prepared parents in the stay and play session prior to the change by answering questions and providing explanations about the importance of including fathers at the Centre.

It was also decided that a Saturday session once a month would capture those dads who could not attend the weekly session. This would give an opportunity to older siblings of primary school age to spend quality time with their dad and take part in the centre's activities.

Dads workers prepared advertising materials, promoted the sessions with local parents & gave out leaflets at the end of the school day in the 3 nearest primary schools. They informed partner organisations attending team meetings and sent out posters and flyers to all partner organisations. They began to ensure other workers in the centre became more 'dad friendly' by looking at how the centre could become more 'dad inviting'. A new dad's notice board was put together in the middle room of the centre.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- Using group sessions to deliver targeted work to vulnerable dads requires a high level of positive modelling by staff. This requires settings to show commitment to this work.
- There was some resistance to change from targeted dads who had attended previous stay and play sessions. Workers need to overcome such barriers.
- There are ongoing demands on workers to recruit and engage new targeted dads to make the groups sustainable in the longer term. Workers need to be wary of burn out when constantly recruiting dads.
- The centre will need to encourage dads already attending the centre to invite other dads in the local community to join them at sessions and act as 'mentor dads' to new arrivals.
- The centre will need to continue to support dads to have positive interactions with their children during the sessions and support dads if they find this parenting role challenging.
- The centre may be able to reach more dads by promoting whole family sessions such as 'family days' that encourage mothers to bring a male carer along for the first time.
- The centre will need to review their strategies and gather evidence that dads sessions improve outcomes for children so that fathers sessions continue.

It offered all dads sessional information, courses that could interest dads, invitation to pick a name for the new group, research into why dads are

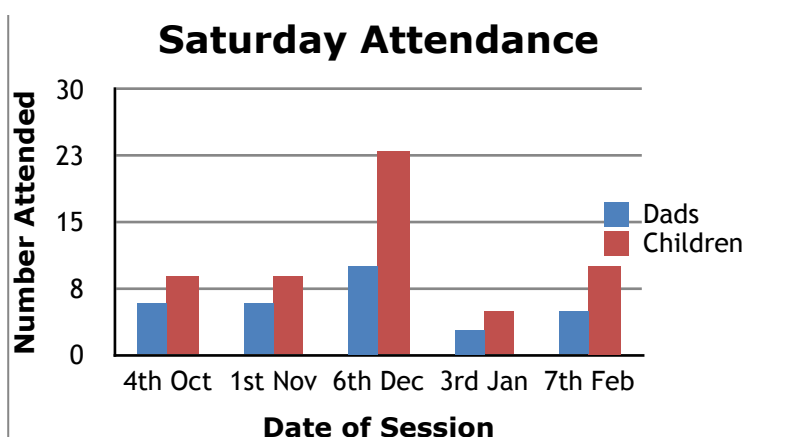
important in their children's lives and positive images of dads and their children.



Saturday dads group

The first session took place as planned on Saturday 4th October. 9 dads and 16 children all enjoyed the session. There was a real positive vibe to the session and a sense that the dads were pleased to have the session just for them up and running. Pizza making was enjoyed by all and successfully engaged the older children. At previous dads groups the main focus had been the breakfast and a catch up with other dads but it had been a struggle to encourage dads to interact positively with their children. Having the focused activity towards the end of the session kept the older children engaged throughout the whole session. Tidy up time and singing at the end of the session was implemented in subsequent plans to ensure children would have a structured end to all the sessions. Saturday sessions had a great start and the number of dads and children engaging well continued to be steady.

Saturday attendance between Oct 2014 and March 2015:



"Thank you for all the staff at Cuddesdon Corner for the brilliant service they run because without the Dads Group I wouldn't be able to have regular contact with my children"

Bradley, Male Carer

Tuesday dads group

It was planned that Tuesday sessions would target the most vulnerable dads in the area. The session would be from 1.45pm – 3.30pm every Tuesday and would run in half terms and school holidays. The first term of sessions were focused on getting to know the dads and their children. Workers then started to look at how dads could begin making changes and any issues the men needed support with.

Workers realised that dads attending had been workless for long periods of time and there was no indication that they planned to make a change in the near future. Staff invited Oxford & Cherwell Valley College into a session to promote short courses they had to offer. One dad took up an offer to attend a 4 day construction course where he would have opportunity to take part in 4 different trades. He gave positive feedback about the course and went on to enrol of a full time construction course to start in September 2015.

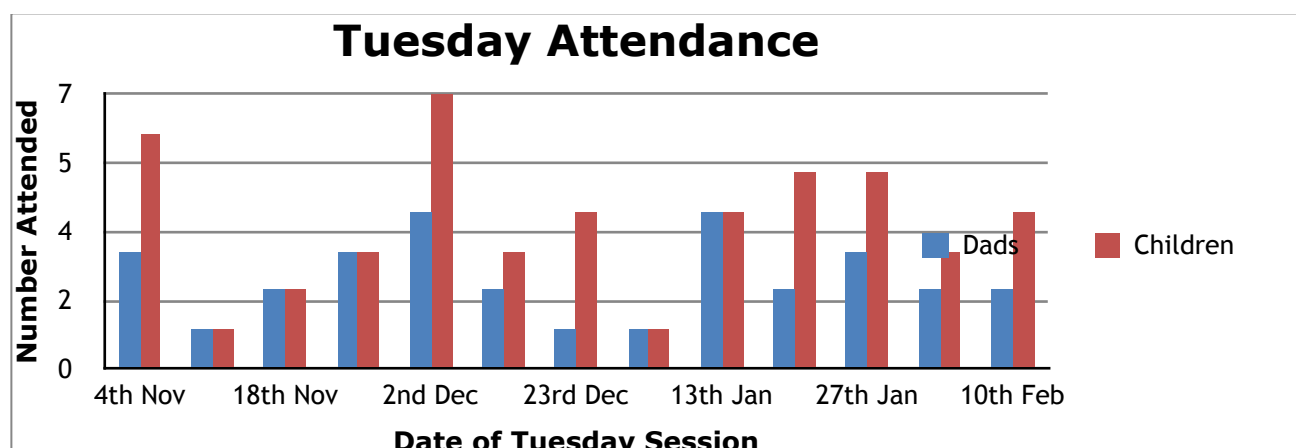
The targeted numbers of dads were lower than the universal dads session due to the nature of the group and the men's more complex needs. This gave an opportunity for workers to engage longer with the men and build positive, trusting relationship fairly quickly. Issues around parenting, boundaries and maintaining healthy relationships were at the fore front for the dads. Having the opportunity of weekly one to one support around those issues was very helpful for the men.



PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Family Journals' were introduced and continue to be offered to dads in sessions. These provide an opportunity for dads to observe and record how their children learn, what they enjoy, their likes & dislikes. Dads are encouraged to take pictures of things their children are interacting with during the sessions and to take notice about their children's play. This process gives the men a chance to praise their children more and provides a celebration of the men's time at the group and their time together with their children. It's also a keepsake for them to take away when their child moves on to another setting. Staff found that the dads and children really enjoyed building the journals each week and non resident dads who were not living with their children commented that the journals were particularly special for them.

Tuesday attendance Nov 2014 - March 2015:



Becoming father-inclusive improves family outcomes

- Male carers now have a regular session in the centre where they can access support, advice and support each other in a friendly, positive space. This is building greater community cohesion as the centre is regarded as a dad friendly space.
- Male carers now have a stimulating learning environment to interact with their children, develop their relationships and support their children's learning. This is helping staff to work with families to offer them free funded childcare places and promote school readiness with hard to reach families.
- Children's learning journeys are now observed each session and outcomes built on in session plans. This is helping staff to identify children's speech and language developmental stages and signpost families to speech and language therapists.
- Male carers now record their children's development through their own 'Family Journal'. This is encouraging more male carers to read with their children every day.
- Male carers and children are engaging more and numbers are now steadily increasing. This is ensuring female partners are offered a break from childcare and gender roles are being renegotiated.
- Male carers have more ownership of the sessions and their voices are being heard more at the centre. This is leading to men feeling included in the centre and men are now prepared to engage in a range of family interventions, such as parenting programmes.
- The centre now works in partnership with organisations such as OCVC, Scope & Oxford City Council to meet the needs of the male carers in the area. This had led to male carers beginning adult learning courses and employment.
- Male carers are supported 1:1 by workers for more complex needs. This has led to male carers self referring themselves to the Making Changes perpetrator programme in order to reduce their abusive behaviours.
- Children's improved outcomes are being tracked over time so they can be evaluated for impact following their positive interactions with their male carer. This is leading to greater buy in from workers who want the centre to continue to have a whole family approach.
- Successful father-inclusive strategies have been documented so these can be replicated when OCC introduces a new Children and Family Centre in Blackbird Leys in 2017.

"I feel valued as a dad when coming to the centre, I like the openness of being able to talk to the staff and that my ideas are listened to. M is enjoying his Tuesday afternoon sessions as it's time for just me and him, he's calmed down a lot and I've really noticed how much he learns when he's at the centre." Male carer

"We are really encouraged by the positive start that our fathers' workers have got off to. Now we want to build and consolidate their work. Having fathers in the centre is a really important aspect of our work and we would love to see it grow." Amanda Powell, Head of the Leys Children's Centre, 2015.

"Saturdays have a very positive and vibrant feel with dads interacting with their children. Dads who attend Tuesdays remain engaged and feel having the space just for them and their children is positive." Carla Preen, Senior Children's Centre Worker.

DADS' GROUPS



James Palmer is the Dads worker & Forest School leader at the ACE Children's Centre and Nursery School in Oxfordshire. He explains how the centre engages with all types of male carers and their children by offering a range of sessions and services for men. Outreach work is also provided to target male carers who need advice, skills and support.

Key findings

- ◆ Fathers that have attended the weekly Dads group have done so consistently over the last few years.
- ◆ The weekly Dads group has expanded into including Forest School sessions so fathers can play with their children in natural outdoor spaces.
- ◆ The Dads worker runs additional Saturday sessions to increase the reach and engagement of working fathers and offers them quality interactions.
- ◆ Specific father friendly sessions are provided to extend the Centre's offer to men, such as First Aid sessions for non working, single and young dads.
- ◆ The Dads worker provides outreach support for vulnerable fathers and works with social care to safeguard children.

Overview

As the Ace Children's Centre Dads Worker, James offers a variety of sessions for fathers. His time is split between running specific group sessions for dads and offering 1:1 time to men that need additional support. Dads are also welcome to attend the regular family stay and play sessions in the week and there has been a steady increase in fathers attending all sessions at the centre. This inclusive approach has encouraged more dads to access family services and has provided them with quality interactions with their children. The fathers have said how important it is to have a Dads Worker as a point of contact. Father's have particular appreciated having access to a designated male worker to discuss certain issues they need support for.

Weekly Dads Group

The centre has been running a dads group every week during school term time for several years. There is a core of 5 or 6 dads who come every week with several others attending more sporadically. The group provides them with an opportunity to socialise with other local dads and spend time with their children. James has used this group to run different activities including Forest School and tea time sessions. The activities for fathers and their children have included den building, fire making, cooking and telling stories in the woods linked to The Fatherhood Institute's FRED campaign (Fathers Reading Every Day).



Next Steps for Oxfordshire

- The outstanding Ofsted rated centre will need to reflect on how services can still be provided for fathers in its catchment following proposed local authority budget cuts and the ending of its OCC's funding in 2017.
- The worker will need to continue to focus on outreach skills that support vulnerable fathers should OCC managers choose to employ fathers workers in its new service model.
- The centre may want to promote itself as a hub of specialism, such as working with men. This could be offered in a clustered model across a combined rural area to gain alternative funding streams.
- The centre will need to continue to deliver fathers work and evidence improved outcomes for families through fathers work so it can show this to other funders in Oxfordshire once OCC's funding has finished.
- The Dads worker may want to continue to be a Fathers' Champion and access OPF Fathers' Champion Network meetings should there be opportunities to deliver fathers work in OCC's new service model in 2017 or at the Centre through other funding streams.

First Aid for Dads

After running previous successful general sessions to celebrate Father's Day, James decided in June 2015 to provide a more specialist event. This was a free two hour paediatric first aid course for Dads. The course was well attended by 11 fathers, including non working dads, single dads and young dads. Every participant gave positive feedback.

"Now I will feel more confident to reacting to an emergency situation whereas before I would have had no idea." Male carer



Offering additional sessions for more targeted dads meant James could invite the course attendees to the group of regular dads on Saturdays. As many of them had not attended this group before this enabled them to access a broader range of support, have the chance to meet up with other local dads and remain engaged at the centre.

Saturday Dads Group

This runs every week during school term time, it's an open drop in session with space for soft play and other core activities, sand play, water play, crafts, role play and an outdoor space. Attendance is usually around 7 or 8 dads per week with a group of 5 or 6 regular attendees. Although this is not a large number James feels that the centre benefits from having a core of dads who always welcome newcomers and are willing to come every week despite having other things to do during the month. This is important as the centre has a wide rural catchment and needs to encourage dads to access the centre for services.

"This session gives me time to be with my daughter as I work long hours, I feel this is invaluable for both myself and her." Male carer

James feels it is important there is a provision for dads in the future. Dads will need to continue to be supported and meet up and have somewhere to go despite the local authorities decision to close all 44 of its existing Children's Centres. James is hoping that dads continue to meet up outside of the centre group and support each other. This is good for the local community and the time spent with their children and support for their partners.



Outreach work

James has become more involved in targeted outreach work with dads as this has become a greater priority. This also requires time and space to meet with men and support them in their positive interactions with their children. This has led to work with the centre's outreach workers and social care to ensure male carers on Child Protection plans are engaged and supported.

"As well as the dads groups at the centre we also provide outreach to dads who cannot make it to us. We are currently working with a single dad who has three children. The support we have given him has been wide ranging. He is rurally isolated so we have been able to offer lifts to meetings to make sure he is able to attend. We have discussed parenting strategies to enable him to cope with the demands of bringing up three differently aged children. He has used some of these strategies to create a positive routine in the house and to potty train his youngest son. We have been able to help him to access benefits which he is entitled to including child benefit, tax credits and income support. This has enabled him to provide a secure and safe environment for the children to live in, as well as provide extra curricular activities for them. We have also helped him too apply for a child arrangement order so that the children have a stable home."

James Palmer, OCC Dads Worker, ACE Children's Centre

"The Dads Worker has used his role in a positive way with the families at the centre. He offers an approach that our vulnerable dads feel they can relate to, a listening ear and sound advice. We constantly have feedback from male carers saying that talking to another male helps them in a unique way. In turn this gives us a chance to target problems far earlier and offers the best chance of successful outcomes. The Dads Group sessions are always fun and popular and the First Aid course was extremely successful. By successfully guiding a single dad through the court system he has been a link for the family between Social Care and the community."

Lynn Bailey, ACE Family Centre Co-ordinator.

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Give it time!'

"Working with men can take time. Do not feel disheartened if sessions are not immediately busy with dads. I find a relaxed approach often works, don't be too heavy handed. Also provide food! Fathers want to feel included at the centre but can be put off by feeling obliged to attend every Dads Group session. They will take ownership of a session if they feel relaxed, listened to and inspired. Become a Dads Champion and access support across the county at OPF Fathers' Champion Network meetings. Remember it takes time to adapt a centre to becoming father-inclusive. Stay focussed on achieving positive outcomes for dads and their children." **James Palmer, OCC Dads worker**

DADS WORKER



Martin Andrews has been the Dads worker at Grandpont Children's Centre for the last 7 years. He delivers stay and plays for dads and supports vulnerable dads on C.P plans with 1:1 work. The centre has had the highest reach of fathers in the county and is considered a hub for fathers work. As a Fathers' Champion, he supports father-inclusive practice and services having a whole family approach. He is a member of the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood and is an advisor for a new UK fathers Foundation.

Key findings

- ◆ The Dads worker puts on open access stay and play sessions for dads. The centre has reached 47% of all dads with under 5's in its catchment, the highest percentage of fathers in the county at the time.
- ◆ The Dads worker supports fathers with solution based tools and works with social workers, health visitors and probation officers.
- ◆ The Dads worker identifies service gaps for dads and delivers gender-differentiated pilots to meet these gaps.
- ◆ The centre has completed a Dads Test audit and organised seminars by The Fatherhood Institute and Roger Olley MBE.
- ◆ A range of vulnerable dads supported by the worker have stepped down from C.P. Plans.
- ◆ The Dads worker is a Fathers' Champion and has delivered training for OCC and OSCB.
- ◆ Governors want to find new funding in 2017 for dads work.

Background

Martin Andrews first visited Grandpont Children's Centre in 2008 when he was a stay at home dad and main carer for his baby daughter.

They attended a Baby PEEP group programme together and he got to know the centre staff. He volunteered at sessions and in 2009 was employed part time as the centre's new Dads worker. Having visited many early years settings and stay and plays with his daughter, Martin was aware of the lack of organised sessions for fathers in Oxfordshire at this time. Most Children's Centres in Oxfordshire were only just beginning to consider the needs of fathers. Like other settings, Grandpont Children's Centre had not yet established stay and plays for fathers or developed strategies for engaging more fathers to attend with their children. It had not yet considered delivering services specifically for male carers in a gender-differentiated way or trained its staff in father-inclusive practice. When starting work at the centre, the Dads worker and Centre manager discussed the several stages needed to establish fathers work at the centre so that it could become effective and remain sustainable. From 2009 to 2015 the centre has undergone 3 distinct periods of work. This has ensured it now has a whole family approach and includes fathers in all of its services.





Next steps for Oxfordshire

- There has been previous resistance by some staff at the centre to work weekend sessions. OCC managers may want to support staff flexibility in its new service model.
- OCC does not provide Dads workers or outreach workers any training in fathers work. If OCC managers want staff to work effectively with men and retain a KPI that states the need to include fathers in services it may need to provide training.
- OCC managers may need to provide a career structure for men to work with fathers and help them to remain in early years. If male workers leave the sector it will be harder to create less feminised environments that appeal to fathers.
- Consultation on Ofsted's new framework may want to include how to reward 'development' work with fathers that may have initial low reach figures.
- Senior OCC managers may want to take a more strategic lead on fathers work so it is less reliant on Dads workers to do this.

First wave of Dads work 2009-2011

Re-gendering of the Children's Centre by increasing the numbers of fathers at the centre. Increasing male carer registrations and increasing the assessments of men's needs. Delivering dads only sessions in a male friendly environment that celebrate fatherhood.

- A range of stay and play sessions were set up so fathers could attend the centre. This included a weekend Saturdads group with EYFS learning activities for dads and their children. It enabled dads to have access to professionals such as health visitors and economic advisors and use the centre for contact visits with their children.



Economic wellbeing officer advising dads, 2010

- Staff began to register all new fathers' details as they visited the centre. A mailing list of over 100 local dads was created to inform them of upcoming events for dads and support available from the centre's Dads worker.
- The team delivered inspirational Saturdads activities to entice more men to visit the centre with their children. This included rocket making, outdoor cooking, planting trees, drumming circles, making go-karts, toddler yoga, den making and forest school. Guests were invited such as Zoolab, musicians, artists in residence and storytellers.
- The volume and reach of male carers using the centre increased rapidly as word got out that the centre was targeting fathers and supporting their needs in a male friendly environment. Saturdads numbers grew from around 10 dads to around 25 dads per session.
- Positive facts and images of dads were used in the centre to promote fathers as a resource to their children.
- The Dads worker became a Fathers' Champion and shared the centre's work at quarterly OPF Fathers' Champions Network meetings.
- Professionals started to take the centre's work with men seriously as they saw children's outcomes improve from dads work.



Second wave of Dads work 2011-2013

'Completion of a Dads Test audit. Identification of barriers and service gaps for different types of fathers and attempts to meet these through staff training from the Fatherhood Institute and Roger Olley MBE. The use of gender specific sessions for hard to reach dads. The use of postnatal services for dads and increased work with social care and health services.'

- The centre started to deliver gender specific services for fathers in order to reach more targeted male carers. Services that had previously only been offered to mothers were now offered to fathers, such as 'Baby Massage for Dads', 'PEEP programme for dads', 'Parenting skills programme for Dads', 'First Aid for Dads' and 'Mental Wellbeing sessions for Dads'. This led to more diverse fathers attending sessions such as BME dads, young dads, dads with babies, separated dads and dads on C.P plans.
- The centre modelled father-inclusive practice with social workers and health visitors and promoted joint working with these agencies, who became more aware of the centre's offer to support hard to reach men. This led to an increase in requests for support for fathers by these agencies, an increase in attendance of fathers on Child Protection plans at the centre's dads only programmes, an increase in contact visits at Saturdads sessions, an increase in the Dads worker's case load of men on C.P plans and an increase in the worker being invited to C.P core meetings with fathers he supported.
- In 2012, 107 fathers living in catchment with an under 5 year old were reached by the centre and attended dads sessions, with an additional 41 fathers accessing the centre outside catchment. This was equivalent to 47% of all fathers and was the highest reach of fathers in the county. This was more than double the county wide average for fathers reached at 19.1%, 3 times higher than the average in the north of the county at 16.8% and nearly six times higher than the lowest reach of a Centre in the south of the county at 8.4%.
- During this period, over a quarter of all carers accessing the centre were male (28%). This increase demonstrated that given the opportunity, families were re-negotiating gender roles and co-parenting. Fathers became visible active care givers at the centre, mothers went back to work and hard to reach dads were more willing to engage.



PEEP programme for Dads, 2011



Baby Massage for Dads, 2012

Grandpont CC's 'reach' of different male carers at sessions from 2011-2012:

Baby Club for Dads x 25 carers
Baby Massage for Dads x 25 carers
Dads Club twilight session x 32 carers
Family Fun Saturdays x 53 carers
Family Health session x 18 carers
Family weekly drop in x 23 carers
Happy crawlers drop in x 23 carers
Hilary's music x 10 carers
Me and My Dad main carers x 24 carers
Saturdads and contact visits x 60 carers
Thursday afternoon play x 35 carers

- A Dads Test audit was completed in order to develop a whole family approach. This led to additional training for the centre's outreach workers who previously had only provided family support for mothers and were not always aware of the benefits to children by including fathers. Outreach workers were encouraged to include fathers in their family assessments and offer fathers support whether they lived with their children or not.
- Two seminars on fathers work were organised to share best practice at the centre. These were attended by around 50 delegates each. The seminars enabled the centre to champion dads work to centre managers, strategic leads, stakeholders and agencies who were present in order to develop future joint working and embed a whole family approach. The first seminar's key note speech was made by David Bartlett, co-founder of The Fatherhood Institute and guests from OPF's 'Think Dads' group. The second seminar was presented by Roger Olley MBE from Including Men. The presentations provided staff with evidence based examples of how to work with men effectively, how to challenge institutionalised barriers, how to champion fathers work and how to promote the idea of an integrated service for men in Oxfordshire. The seminars served as a means to invite practitioners from around the county to reflect on their practices and enabled Grandpont Children's Centre to acknowledge the increase in fathers who were active carers at the centre and celebrate its successful achievements with dads.
- By April 2013, the total reach of dads and their children at father-inclusive sessions for the year increased further: 55 attended Baby Club for Dads, 13 attended contact visits, 75 attended Dad Club, 29 attended First Aid Training, 32 attended Me and My Dad, 147 attended Saturdads.

"I really enjoyed my visit and got a strong sense of your commitment and the progress you are making with fathers. Well done!"

David Bartlett, co-founder of The Fatherhood Institute.



Third wave of Dads work 2013-2015

'Increased caseload work with vulnerable men, including separated fathers, male perpetrators, men with mental health needs and those in the criminal justice system. Piloting of new interventions for vulnerable men. Sharing of case studies for OPF reports, the delivery of training for Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and OCC and attendance of the national APPG'.

- This period saw an increase in 1:1 outreach work with vulnerable male carers on C.P and C.I.N plans by the Dads worker, the use of Family Star and solution based tools and closer joint working with statutory services such as social care, health, probation and CAFCASS. The Dads worker increased his outreach work with men based in the various city centre hostels, visited male carers in Bullingdon Prison and was invited by social workers to attend more core meeting to support vulnerable men with their C.P plans and assist in Family Group Conferences.
- The Dads worker developed the centres' offer for male carers with mental health needs. He provided 1:1 wellbeing support to fathers, organised taster sessions with MIND workers, set up monthly evening Mindfulness sessions for men, organised OXPIP baby massage for vulnerable dads, made referrals to the Complex Needs Team, MIND and G.P's. This work culminated in the piloting of a series of 8 relationship and well being workshops which were completed by 6 vulnerable male carers. *See separate case study.*
- As a domestic abuse champion, the Dads worker set up a series of meetings at the centre with stakeholders and the OCC area manager responsible for championing D.A, to promote more effective practice with male perpetrators. These discussions led to the Making Changes perpetrator programme expanding its delivery from Berkshire to Oxfordshire. Following his accredited training, the worker began to offer 1:1 support at the centre for abusive men to self refer themselves to this programme. 7 abusive fathers completed assessments at the Children's Centre and attended the 27 week programme. These abusive men on C.P/C.I.N plans would not otherwise have referred themselves and completed a perpetrator programme. *See separate case study.*
- The Dads worker was aware of limited services for separated fathers in the county. He was invited to work with a new Family Matters mediation pilot, funded by the Department of Work and Pensions. This led to free mediation and legal advice sessions delivered at the centre for about 20 separated fathers and led to effective 1:1 work with a number of vulnerable male carers. *See separate case study.*
- The centre met a service gap in the county when it piloted a series of 8 parenting skills workshops for fathers. The Dads worker co-delivered a Webster-Stratton programme in a father-inclusive manner by arranging evening delivery times and offering it to an all male group. These workshops were attended by 32 male carers and were evidenced and included in



a published report by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum. The report findings led to the Early Intervention Hub Directory recommending in 2014 that its 7 settings should offer fathers 'male only' parenting programmes and deliver them in a father-inclusive manner as part of a whole family approach. *See separate case study.*

- The Dads worker was able to share the centres' successful father-inclusive practice when he was invited to deliver a series of training in the county. This included 'Fathers work - how to engage male carers' for Oxfordshire County Council's annual early years conference at the Kings centre. 'How to work with hard to reach fathers' at the city leads and county leads meetings for OCC Children's Centre and area managers. He worked with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board to co-deliver two training sessions on 'How to work with young men and boys and young fathers'. Oxfordshire Parenting Forum invited him to deliver training on 'Completing a Dads Test Audit' for early years practitioners and a teenage pregnancy strategy group in the north of the county. In 2015 the Dads worker was invited to share best practice of fathers' work in Oxfordshire at the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood, chaired by MP David Lammy and he attends a new Fathers' Foundation led by UK's Working With Men.

Working with male carers with complex needs

In addition to providing family support to many male carers, the Dads worker has a regular case load of around 5-10 male carers who require intensive outreach support for their complex needs as part of a Child In Need or Child Protection plan. This often requires supporting men who do not want to engage with social care or female outreach workers and have been referred by social workers. Typical examples of Child Protection fathers work include:

Dad 1: Unemployed separated young male carer involved in criminality and substance misuse seeking contact with his toddler son following incidents of domestic violence with his ex-partner.

Previous conflict with social services. The Dads worker arranged weekly 1:1 sessions using a solution based approach. This led to improved engagement by the father who then completed a parenting skills programme at the centre. The worker then focussed on the fathers' previous abusive behaviours and the father agreed to self refer himself to a 27 week perpetrator programme. Following the completion of the programme the worker helped the father focus on re-training and he gained full time employment for the first time in 5 years. Following these successful changes social services downgraded the child from the Child Protection Plan and granted the father unsupervised contact with his 3 year old son for the first time in his life. The father returned to the centre on the first day of his unsupervised contact to thank the Dads worker for his support.

Dad 2: Father with diagnosed mental health disorder and substance misuse who had recently separated from his child's mother following a serious assault. Seeking contact with his baby son but a reluctance to engage with social services or accept support.

The Dads worker arranged weekly 1:1 sessions using a solution based approach. This led to improved engagement by the father and the start of contact visits at the centre. The father began to attend stay and plays, including weekend Baby Club for Dads sessions. The father accessed baby massage sessions for dads and re-engaged with the health visitor. He completed a series of health advice sessions and safety at home advice. This led to social care agreeing to his baby son having overnight stays. Following 1:1 sessions with the Dads worker the father self referred himself to the Making Changes perpetrator programme and was signposted to a First Aid course. The father signed up and completed a 10 week Webster-Stratton Dino Parenting skills programme. Following this support at the centre and the fathers' on going positive interactions with his son, Social care downgraded the child from the Child Protection Plan. The father now has regular unsupervised overnight stays with his son, he is the joint main carer and safety factor for the child's joint care.

Feedback at the centre

"I've been coming to Grandpont for a year now. I have contact with my daughter at the weekly dads group, which I really enjoy coming to. I went to the 'Healthy Relationships workshops for Dads' at the centre for 8 weeks. This was really helpful how to be a parent. I'm also looking forward to continuing the 'Making Changes' programme. It's good talking to the Dads worker, it's always helpful. I hope this centre can continue and other men can benefit from it."

Male carer on a Child In Need Plan

"I used to come to the centre to have contact with my young daughter. The dads worker helped me get some mediation and legal advice as my baby mother didn't want me to have overnight stays. I kept going to Saturdads and did all the right things and showed that I could care for my daughter. It's much better now. I have my daughter overnight in the week and everyone is happy. It has worked out really well"

Young male carer

"I come to the Children's Centre at Grandpont. It's fantastic, especially for dads. As a full-time carer I find it really helpful. I've met other dads which can be quite difficult sometimes. I'm doing a parenting course for dads as well, you learn a lot of helpful stuff. It will be a real tragedy if there weren't these services for people like me as I have learnt so much as a dad."

Full-time male carer

"A higher proportion of fathers than seen elsewhere in the county attend centre-run groups such as 'Me and My Dad', and take up targeted support to improve their health and well-being." OFSTED report, 2014

"I attended the wellbeing workshops because I wanted to get a better understanding of co-parenting now I am separated. It was really productive to have the opportunity to talk. I gained confidence in making positive choices for my children."

Separated male carer

"I have been going regularly to the baby massage sessions for dads. It has helped me to bond with my daughter. The Dads worker invites professionals to talk with dads. I thought the PEEP class was very good. It covered lots of interesting stuff like Treasure Baskets, books for babies and singing which we now try out at home. I have to say, I have been very impressed with the quality of services for dads and their babies at the centre."

Main carer

"It is great to have the chance to come to Saturdads. There are always good play ideas to do and I get to have quality time with my daughter. It helps being able to meet other dads who use the centre. It's a friendly male environment where dads can develop their fathering skills at their own pace and get advice from the Dads worker."

Male carer

"I have volunteered at the centre's dads sessions for the last year in order to gain experience of working with small children and to support my application to become an approved adopter. My experience and the support from the Children's Centre staff definitely helped my application. I experienced child-centred play and activities in action and witnessed first hand how play develops and reinforces children's learning. I have been very aware of the vital work the centre does with dads and male carers. For some male carers it is an opportunity for fun, messy play to increase early attachments with their children. For others it is the only contact they have with their children, contact they may not have if this safe, child-centred facility is withdrawn."

Male volunteer at Saturdads

Photo gallery of male carers

Images reproduced with the kind permission of the male carers



Me and My Dad session



Bookstart resources



Baby Club for dads



Young Dads session



English class BME dad



Saturdads BME dad



Saturdads toddler yoga



Parenting programme



Separated dads trip



Young dads trip



Dads Space session



Saturdads stay and play

"When I was first asked to set up a dads stay and play session 7 years ago, it was mainly intended to be a way to get any dads using the centre. I feel the centre has contributed to a shift in the behaviours of local fathers over the last few years as men have become more positively involved in their children's lives. Fathers like having access to sessions at the centre which are focussed on their children's development and their needs as male carers. The centre has always tried to offer the same level of service to fathers as mothers. Dads have told us they appreciated this and they have responded best when we have delivered services in a father-inclusive manner.



Recent austerity measures have meant services are now primarily focussed on fathers who pose a risk to their child. Whilst it is essential to safeguard children this means services are no longer able to support all fathers to be a resource to their children. The benefits to all children having a positive male carer who can help with their learning and development are being lost. I think the opportunity to build on the success of fathers work in the last few years in Oxfordshire is now under threat. The demand for services to include fathers is still there. Our Saturdads sessions from 2009 to 2015 were attended by over 600 different dads and children. I hope OCC decides to continue to offer fathers this sort of open access as it provides essential early attachment and learning for children and promotes a whole family approach.

My work with vulnerable fathers has been very rewarding, particularly when I have been able to help men come off Child Protection Plans and they are no longer considered a risk to their child. This work involves intensive 1:1 solution based practices to support men with their mental health, substance misuse and abusive behaviours. These men will often be resistant to working with social care or outreach workers that are not trained in father-inclusive practice. They will respond to Dads workers experienced in working with men. It has been pleasing to see these men make positive changes for themselves and for the benefit of their children and partners.



I hope that OCC will offer outreach workers training in how to work with vulnerable fathers when it launches its new Children and Family Centres in its new service model in 2017. I believe current OCC strategic leads understand the benefits to children by engaging fathers and are committed to taking the lead in championing a whole family approach. It is pleasing to see this report acknowledge the hard work done by Dads workers who have pioneered this work over the last few years in order to make sure fathers are included in services. By listening to practitioners who know what methods work for fathers, strategic leads have an opportunity to embed this father-inclusive practice into its new service model and improve outcomes for children. If senior managers do not champion fathers work I believe fathers will quickly disengage from services, men will remain a risk and statutory services will struggle to cope with safeguarding. I hope that Oxfordshire has learnt from previous serious case reviews that have demonstrated that services that ignore male carers put children's lives at risk."

Martin Andrews, Fathers Practitioner, Grandpont Children's Centre, 2016

DADS' GROUPS



Barb Crowther is the outreach worker responsible for fathers work at The Maple Tree Children's Centre in Wheatley and previously worked with dads at the Roundabout Centre, Barton. Her work has increased the inclusion of male carers at the Centre. She has done this by promoting a wide range of father friendly services which male carers, partners and children can access and benefit from.

Key findings

- ◆ The centre ran a regular **Saturdads session** to get fathers to access services with their children.
- ◆ A male Hub worker and the centre's outreach worker collaborated to develop a welcoming male environment.
- ◆ A mixed gender session was added to the Saturday programme to encourage mothers to introduce male partners to the centre.
- ◆ The outreach worker became a **Fathers' Champion** and attended **OPF Fathers' Champions Network meetings** to share best practice.
- ◆ The centre ensured male carers were welcomed at its full range of services. The centre now has male carers attending sessions throughout the week.
- ◆ Engaging fathers helped reduce the isolation of families in rural areas.
- ◆ Fathers who attended gave positive feedback of improved outcomes.

Saturdads group

The Maple Saturdads group was started in September 2012 by Dad's Champion Barb Crowther. The sessions were run fortnightly to encourage male carers to attend on a regular basis on a Saturday. The group was exclusively for dads and male carers and their under 5 year olds and older siblings. The Children's Centre also worked jointly with Kev Jackson, an Early Intervention Hub worker, to develop the group. Barb and Kev worked to establish the group as a male only friendly environment whilst offering dads and their children play activities and support.



Saturplay family sessions

Following family consultations, the centre introduced a three month trial of running both the established Saturdads group and a mixed gender Saturplay family session once a month. The additional family sessions provided an opportunity for working parents to attend with their partner and encouraged mothers to introduce male partners who may not have been before. The centre increased the inclusion of BME male carers by organising family sessions which included an international food theme and where families brought along a national dish and shared these within the group.

Including fathers in all sessions

The centre then focussed on encouraging all types of male carers to access the full range of family services they offered. These had previously been mainly attended by mothers. Following this, male carers



Being father-inclusive

- Dads who have become regular users of **Saturdads** have increased their play and learning time with their children.
- Dads who have accessed the centre's full range of services have been able to develop new skills which have benefited their child, such as Parenting skills, First Aid training, Baby massage.
- As a Fathers' Champion, Barb has promoted the benefits of fathers work in the centre to fathers, mothers and staff. Barb has attended and organised Fathers' Champions Network meetings. This work helped to the establish the centre's belief that children's outcomes are improved with increased positive interactions with a father or male carer.
- Vulnerable male carers have had access to a dads outreach worker, an early intervention worker and been signposted to services for complex needs. This has reduced male carers' risky behaviours around children.
- The centre has provided separated dads with a venue for contact sessions with their children and supported them to have positive interactions.

became keen members of all the sessions, including:

- **'Bumps to Babies'**, whole family postnatal support including breast-feeding advice at **'Baby Café'**.
- **'Forest Fun'**, outdoor learning sessions, both as family groups and exclusively for dads.
- **'Stay and Play'** sessions in three different settings, Wheatley, Great Milton Primary School and Neighbours Hall on both Wednesdays and Fridays.
- **'Talk and Toddler', 'PEEP', 'Baby Massage'** and **'Family Links'** on Tuesdays offered carers parenting skills, communication and attachment advice.
- **'First Aid Training'** on Thursday evenings proved popular with male carers seeking practical tips.
- A **'Community Evening'** provided carers with an opportunity to share their own home working ideas, set up individual stalls and network.
- **'Antenatal Welcome'** sessions 3 times per year offered whole family advice for expectant carers and partners.

Positive outcomes for families

The worker asked fathers for their feedback on the impact of them and their children using the centre. Barb realised that this had led to some significant gains in the families and children's outcomes.



- ◆ *The Dad's only group helped to nurture peer to peer relationships with other local dads in a rural setting. This enhanced community life, reduced family isolation and meant mothers were more supported by their partners.*
- ◆ *Dads who attended the groups had the opportunity to share in their child's development with professionals who provided them with support in all areas of child development. This led to fathers receiving specific advice in health, entitlement to benefits and being signposted to other local family services.*
- ◆ *Dads who accessed parenting skills support were able to see the daily routines from a child's eye and this helped to build their confidence. This led to more cohesion in the family setting and provided a calmer environment for the whole family.*

Male carers and workers feedback:

SATURDADS

"Saturdays is really great for me as it is a time when I can spend one on one time with one of my daughters which is very precious to me. I've also been on the first aid course and that has helped me to know what to do. Saturdays is also great to meet other dads in the village. This helps build a vital community spirit which is so vital to all of us. It is really appreciated and valued by me."

PARENTING SKILLS

"We are becoming more positive as we are able to deal with more situations easier. I am explaining things better and staying calmer"

OUTREACH WORKER

"Now that dads as well as mums attend the centre this has given workers more opportunities to link families to partnership agencies. This has enhanced the physical health and mental well being of the children by supporting the whole family." Barb Crowther, Outreach worker, The Maple Tree

BABY SESSIONS

"I remember how helpful Jayne from Baby Café was when our family was supported with the new baby. I found her support very helpful in those early days of parenting"

STAY & PLAYS

"I now have better interaction with my child. My child loves going to stay and play and the Dad's sessions are increasing our time together."

SATURDADS

"I've been delighted with my son's progress. Each day he has new words and expressions. The centre has a rich nurturing environment"

"The team at the Maple Tree recognise the important role fathers and male carers play in the development of their children, especially in the early years. We have worked hard to ensure dads and male carers feel welcome and supported at all our sessions and activities. This has been reflected in the last 12 months where we have seen an increase in the number of dads and male carers attending the centre."

Jane Gillman, Manager, The Maple Tree Children's Centre.

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP: **The three magic questions!**

You cannot work with the whole family unless you first know who they all are.

For children to benefit most, workers need to include and engage the whole family. It can be difficult for settings to work with fathers if they do not know who they are or where they live. To overcome this issue workers need to make sure they register contact details for the whole family and then text or email fathers details of their father-inclusive services. Services wanting to adopt a whole family approach can start by asking themselves the three magic questions:

- 1. Is there a dad in the family?**
- 2. What can we do to help the dad?**
- 3. How will the dad's positive involvement improve his partner and child's outcomes?**

DADS OUTDOORS



'Dads Outdoors' was an OPF funded project that ran from September 2011 to December 2012. Its aim was to encourage fathers, their children and 8 local Children's Centres to make full use of their local environment for outdoor play. This is a summary of *Rob Beal's* published report that outlined the positive outcomes achieved and the impact it has had on fathers work.

Key findings

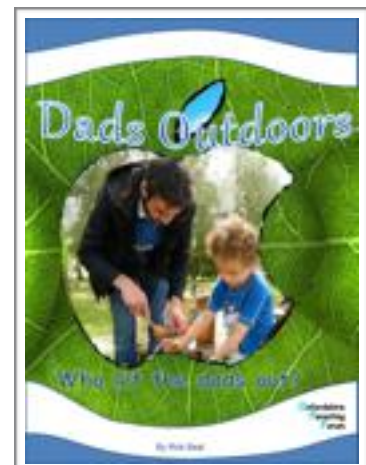
- ◆ Positive outcomes for male carers and their children were recorded from all 8 Children's Centres involved.
- ◆ Male carers preferred accessing services outside and away from the Children's Centres as they felt these still acted as barriers by being female dominated environments.
- ◆ Fathers were surveyed before and after the projects and they provided positive feedback. They said their knowledge of where to visit outdoor spaces had increased and they now spent more time outdoors with their children.
- ◆ Fathers said they believed their children's outcomes had also improved. They believed their children's self esteem had increased and their children had developed a more positive attitude to outdoor play.

Background

The project was seen as an opportunity to build on the increasing numbers of fathers attending Children's Centres and the growing interest in outdoor education. Previous outdoor learning projects such as 'Without Walls', 'Forest School' & 'Walking Maps' had prepared the ground, but 'Dads Outdoors' was

innovative in being solely targeted at male carers and their children. Children's Centres were keen to be involved in order to increase their engagement of fathers, particularly vulnerable male carers and their children. Rob Beal was funded by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum as the part time Outdoor Development Worker to coordinate the project. He provided support for the 8 Children's Centres organising outdoor activities and completed the final report. The emphasis for the project was to organise activities for no or low cost, with centres using the Dads Outdoor grant scheme to fund trips to different settings. It was hoped the benefits of the project for fathers and their children would include:

- increasing physical activity & the body's vitamin D levels
- reducing anxiety, improving mood and concentration
- developing communication, imaginative & creative play
- promoting problem solving and leadership skills
- developing new outdoor learning champions



Learning if this work is repeated?



- Some of the 8 Centre's had limited previous experience of taking learning into the outdoor environment.
- Centre's had to learn how to risk assess outdoor activities without creating risk free environments which would limit the learning.
- Centre's wanting to promote child led play had to learn to give children the freedom and self responsibility to manage dangers themselves.
- Not all centre's had the resources to ensure a designated worker could oversee the project. Planning, organisation, continuity and ethos of the projects were passed from staff to staff and reduced the fathers' experiences.
- The aim of delivering 1:1 outreach work with vulnerable fathers was limited by a lack of dads workers employed in children's centres at the time or training provided to outreach workers in father-inclusive practices by the local authority.

East Street Children's Centre, Banbury

The centre had an existing dads group, they had engaged fathers in its Forest school outdoor activities and taken part in the annual 'Fathers' Story Week' event that promoted the importance of fathers involvement in their child's literacy development. This culminated in the 'Telling Tales with Dad' project in June 2011 with an overnight camp out at the centre focussing on dads telling stories around a camp fire.

A local artist who was also a dad attending the centre was then commissioned to create a story telling chair and lead storytelling workshops with other dads at the group. It was hoped this would create an 'outdoor space' for



men to share stories. Dads and their children were asked about designs for the chair and chose pirates, dragons and monsters with children drawing their own designs. A giant oak log was sourced and the dads began helping with carving the design at the group. The dads felt they had contributed to a great piece of art work which would inspire children and their families to tell stories and share books together and resulted in a real sense of achievement and ownership.

"I thought the idea of the story chair was amazing. Seeing the log being transformed into a dragon really inspired my children's imagination and they were really interested in reading about dragons as a result. Great fun, very educational and personally rewarding."

The local artist dad also led 3 storytelling workshops that included puppets, comic strip creations, making masks and dramatic storytelling performances. These provided the other dads with ideas of storytelling techniques to develop with their own children.



Dad's & Children's Outcomes & data



- A questionnaire was completed by the dads who took part in the 8 different Children's Centre projects.
- 57% stated that their knowledge of places to go had increased.
- 57% of fathers stated that they spent more time outdoors with their children.
- 49% stated that they increased their visits to outside places as a family.
- 68% of fathers believe that their children increased their self confidence and self esteem.
- 80% felt their children had developed a positive attitude to outdoor play and learning.
- 42% of fathers stated that the outdoor activities provided by the Children's Centres were excellent and a further 46% stated good.

Volume & Reach

- The total average across a 9 month period was 78 fathers and 106 children regularly accessing outdoor activities.
- 100% of settings stated that they felt the projects had been 'somewhat successful' at engaging with vulnerable and minority families.
- 66% of the settings believed that the projects had led to greater father participation in Children's Centre activities.

Marston Northway Children's Centre, Oxford

The centre had been running its Dynamic Dads stay and play group since 2009. It applied for project funding to give local fathers and children the opportunity to explore the outdoor spaces in their community. Workers hoped by organising more outdoor events away from the centre this would attract more hard to reach dads.

Activities started in 2012 with outdoor sessions in the centre garden; breakfast barbecues, gruffalo hunts, story times, drumming sessions and den building. The grant enabled staff to purchase kite making kits. This helped to start projects at the centre and then visit outdoor spaces. Dads and their children spent time kite flying in the local park. This was followed by making water rocket shooters and using a local sports centre to test them out.

Dads started to take ownership of the project and a session was organised in one of the dad's own garden with pet goats and chickens.

"A guy at my work makes kite with his son all the time. I've always wanted to give it a go - thank you!"

Trips were taken to outdoor spaces that dads had not previously visited and could revisit with their children. A trip to Farmer Gow's involved feeding the animals, handling chicks, climbing hay bales and tractor rides. Funds went towards a trip and annual pass to Blenheim Palace with its maze, butterfly house and outdoor walks and lake.

"We've been back to the Palace three times. Now we have the pass it's a free day out and my son loves it there."

For the finale of the project, the dads were offered the opportunity to go camping and stay the night prior to the Play Day event at Hill End.



Outreach feedback

- **Marston Northway** - *"We had a vulnerable family that was completely non engaging that have started to engage with staff and at the Centre due to the trip to the farm."*
- **East Street** - *"Our dads group has always fluctuated in numbers but during this project our numbers stayed steady which meant that we were able to engage better."*
- **Elms Road** - *"We had some success engaging some of the ethnic minority families in attending outdoor sessions, including a number of dads who had not used the Centre before. There has been a huge increase in dads attending our regular outdoor events."*
- **North Abingdon** - *"Some of the dads that attend our outdoor projects are non-resident fathers and they have contact time during Forest school. During our Camp Out session we supported male carers with issues on child care, finances, play opportunities and family matters."*
- **Witney** - *"I have had dads with very low self-esteem engage in activities they would never have had the confidence to participate in on their own with their children, had it not been for the outdoor sessions."*
- **Roundabout** - *"Vulnerable families have engaged with activities and within the dads group we have captured more minority families."*

Elms Road Children's Centre, Oxford

The centre had been running a dads' Saturday group for 4 years and for the last 2 years had been also running outdoor sessions for families prior to this funded project in 2012. Workers were already aware of the benefits to families through outdoor play and learning and that these open spaces were often free. In previous years carers had visited Hill End Outdoor Centre and attended trips to Science Oxford, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford Fire Station and Oxford Airport.

This project enabled staff to think differently about its local spaces, particularly those that did not involve an organised trip and could be easily revisited by families. This led to workers sharing their knowledge to carers about the wealth of free local outside spaces they could go to with their children. The following activities took place with dads throughout 2012:



Tree planting & cooking over an open fire at the Centre. Making soup and bread dough from self-raising flour and water. Wrapping it round a stick and then cooking over the fire. Children enjoyed making, mixing and kneading the dough.

Project funds were used for Kite flying & Pond Dipping at Hill End Centre.

Making rope swings and cooking over an open fire on Cumnor Hurst. Lengths of rope & sturdy sticks provided the swings and a good deal of discussion and problem solving to get the rope over the branch. We also took tarpaulins for shelter building. This was a space that few of the dads had been before and they all said they would go back.

Visiting the local farm provided lots of opportunities for tractor rides, feeding animals & quality time for dads and their children.

Clay Masks in Botley Park. The dads chose to make masks on the trunks of trees. They decorated them with natural objects such as grass, sticks & stones.

Project impact

- **North Abingdon** - *"The dads have become more confident in taking their children to play outside. The children have started taking more risks in their play. The dads also recognised their children gaining confidence in getting muddy or wet."*
- **Wantage** - *"The project has given us a greater awareness of the outdoors and how you can incorporate it into family time."*
- **The Roundabout** - *"The project has shown fathers places to take their families. It has benefited the children as they have been able to experience different activities outdoors."*
- **Marston Northway** - *"The project has given dads more opportunities for quality time with their children. I have seen fathers really having fun, participating & remembering their own childhoods. They have had time to build relationships with other fathers and bond over outdoor tasks and camping. We now have a better idea of how to work with dads."*
- **East Street** - *"The storytelling project has given fathers the confidence to tell stories with their children in an outdoor environment and the children have developed their confidence in the outdoors."*
- **South Abingdon** - *"Dads have been pleased to find that their skills, opinions and time are valued."*

North Abingdon Children's Centre, Oxford

The Centre had been running Forest School for 2 years prior to the project in 2012. The project aim was to extend the outdoor sessions at the site and increase the involvement of fathers. Activities run by the workers included fishing, mud slides, leaf collecting, hedgehog house making and bird watching. The centre made the 1st Saturday of the month a specific Dad's Forest School session. Carers had been hesitant to allow their children to play outdoors. Because it was expected that the children would get messy at the site they accepted this. Funds went towards children's waterproof suits which were a huge success, keeping the children dry.

When surveyed for their ideas, the dads expressed an interest in camping out and having a day trip to Wittenham clumps.

Following research into campsite costs, the dads decided that they would prefer to camp out in the settings' school field. This offered added security with a site fence, availability of the centre facilities nearby and being close to their homes. Workers offered that younger children could just take part in the daytime activities at Wittenham if they did not want to camp out. Regular emails kept families informed unto the date.

On the day families met at 10am at Wittenham and stayed until 3pm. Activities included searching for wildlife, identifying plants within the

woodland, making leaf crowns, making clay hedgehogs and creating leaf rubbing prints.

Families then returned to the camp site for a barbecue and dads set up tents with their children and played in the Forest School site, dads telling stories and providing the children with

hot chocolate drinks. In the morning the families had breakfast at the Centre and played before taking the tents down. All the dads were very positive in their feedback about the event and expressed a wish to camp again.



Father participation

- **North Abingdon** - *"Yes we are getting fathers to many of our groups during the week and getting strong numbers for our Dad's groups."*
- **Wantage** - *"Dads have heard by word of mouth what fun we have and how different our group is from the ordinary parenting group run in the week. Our dads love being active."*
- **East Street** - *"We regularly get more fathers coming along to outdoor events within the centre, especially at family forest school and trips further afield"*
- **Marston Northway** - *"Some of the fathers that have attended the dads outdoor project are now using the stay and play sessions during the week."*
- **Elms Road** - *"We were already doing a number of outdoor events that were well attended. We are now working on producing a booklet of local parks and open spaces for fathers to go to."*



Camp out and Playday at Hill End, Oxford

A dads camp out was organised at Hill End Outdoor centre on 14th September 2012. This was a culmination and celebration of the different outdoor projects organised by the various Children's Centres. It was timed so families could be part of the Dads Go Wild Playday organised on the site the following day. 10 Dads and their children from Marston Northway and Witney Children's Centres participated in the overnight stay with support from Elms Road Children's Centre. For many of the families it was their first experience of camping.

The dads and children began to arrive at Hill End from 4pm on the Friday to put up their tents. The children were very excited and the workers noted their sense of adventure as they explored the site. The dads and children discussed the various outdoor projects they had participated in and enjoyed over the year, such as cray fishing, den making, kite flying and outdoor storytelling.



Families then settled down to prepare their evening meal on an open fire. This meant outdoor cooking for 35 people and in the spirit of the project the menu was adventurous. It included lentil dhal curry, jacket potatoes, sausage casserole and a variety of marinated halal meats. Workers noted the children's sense of awe as they sat round the fire and cooked. There was a sense of achievement from the dads who had helped cook the food. After eating, songs were sung around the fire and stories told before the families retired to their tents.

Dads Go Wild

In the morning, the dads helped to set up the Dads Go Wild activity area, organised by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum as part of the Playday event. This is an annual event organised by the Oxfordshire Play Association. Many of the dads and children stayed to join in the fun of the Playday and were joined by the rest of their families. It was estimated that the event was attended by 1,200 people.



At the Dads Go Wild area, 20 metres of guttering had been donated by the East Street Centre and set up for families to interact in water play. Inside the tent, workers helped dads and children create their own paper aeroplanes. The third activity was den building. This was very much as child led activity with ropes, camouflage nets, tarpaulins and trellising used to make spectacular hideouts. This was the 5th year of Dads Go Wild events and it was another massive success with positive feedback from all members of the families. Everyone who visited with the Dads Go Wild activities got a sticker which said 'Dad Gone Wild' for dads, 'Wild About Dad' for children and 'Mum Gone Wild' for mums. In total 400 stickers were given out. This provided an excellent way of approaching families to talk to them about the work of OPF and promote the Oxon Dads website and blog and highlight the dads outdoor projects delivered over the year.

VOLUME REPORT OF ALL PROJECTS

*mean average attendance across 9 months = 78 fathers and 106 children. Figures in public domain since 2012.

	North Abingdon	South Abingdon	Wantage	Witney	Marston	Elm's Road	Roundabout	East Street	TOTALS
Jan-Dads	18	<5	13	<5	17	9	18	6	85
Jan-Child	23	6	18	<5	22	10	30	10	119
Feb-Dads	16	<5	10	19	17	8	20	6	99
Feb-Child	23	<5	16	28	17	11	33	10	141
Mar-Dads	22	10	7	23	15	13	17	5	112
Mar-Child	29	12	10	30	18	18	26	12	155
Apr-Dads	16	<5	5	27	14	14	11	6	97
Apr-Child	19	5	6	39	16	19	15	10	129
May-Dads	13	<5	5	18	14	14	13	6	86
May-Child	18	<5	7	23	17	18	19	10	115
Jun-Dad	7	<5	<5	26	10	5	14	5	74
Jun-Child	10	5	<5	34	10	9	25	7	103
July-Dads	<5	6	7	7	12	6	15	10	67
July-Child	<5	8	9	7	14	7	27	14	90
Aug-Dads	6	<5	7	8	<5	<5	<5	7	36
Aug-Child	8	<5	8	10	<5	<5	<5	11	45
Sep-Dads	11	<5	<5	7	10	6	<5	6	48
Sep-Child	15	7	<5	9	12	7	<5	10	63

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'WALKING MAPS' - By sharing an existing knowledge of local outdoor public spaces, workers can promote the use of low cost play and learning activities to families. This can be extended by settings producing a 'walking map' of local attractions that fathers can re-visit with their children, such as parks, ponds, woods and hills. Fathers can be encouraged to offer their own 'top tips' of using outdoor spaces and play ideas, such as den making, kite making, water play, cooking etc. Workers can then incorporate some of these play ideas into the Centre's own stay and plays sessions to increase its future engagement of fathers.

OPF Bushcraft project

At the successful completion of the Dads Outdoors project, OPF wanted to promote greater use by fathers' groups of the Hill End Outdoor Education Centre. OPF worked with Hill End to subsidise a "Bushcraft" Program for dads from June to September 2013. This enabled settings working with men to organise whole or half-day activities at Hill End so fathers and their children could learn and participate in outdoor woodland pursuits.

Organisation and Promotion: The sessions were organised and led by Stuart Turner, an experienced outdoor practitioner. Promotion was organised through OPF Fathers' Champion Network and Oxondads website and blog. Father's Champions contacted Children's Centres and made sure Dads workers, outreach workers and Centre managers were aware of the benefits for fathers and children and how to apply for OPF funding to arrange a group visit to Hill End.

Target groups: Stuart delivered group sessions for dads and their pre school and older sibling children, week time sessions for young dads and Saturday sessions for working dads.

Approach and aims: Stuart wanted to give fathers and their children the experience of enjoying the outdoor natural environment and learning together a range of bushcraft skills. Stuart organised defined activities at the core of the session or day, for people to get involved with as they wish. Skills were nurtured through doing and making, and self-esteem, confidence and creativity were nurtured through children and adults making their own choices of activities and interests. Implicit was the concept of 'environment as third teacher' and a recognition of the benefits of time spent outdoors. Stuart ran 'around the fire' sessions with an emphasis on connection with nature, each other and practical tasks to support community building, encourage skills and relationship building and the value of co-operation. During the sessions workers observed relationships developing between father to father, child to child and father and child.

Activities and tasks: These included coppicing, pollarding and willow work, shelter building, fire making, fuel collection, flint and steel fire lighting, charcoal making, campfire cooking kit from re-cycled materials, greenwood shelter making, woodland management, tool use and maintenance, making greenwood utensils, making willow bows and arrows, art sculptures using natural materials, basic animal tracking, dusk and night walks.

Legacy: Hill End was able to use the OPF funding to construct a permanent bushcraft shelter for future visitors. It now delivers regular bushcraft events for families and for its outreach work with looked after children.



"I took my daughter and son to the bushcraft session. It was fantastic. We spent half a day outside together exploring and making things. We baked calzone pizza in a biscuit tin on the fire and then made willow bows. It was very popular with the dads and children."
Separated male carer



"I applied for funding from OPF and took 12 fathers and their children to a Dads Bushcraft event. I was very impressed by the session activities and the engagement of the dads with their children. It was noticeable how the dads responded positively to outdoor play away from the Children's Centre due to it feeling like a more gender neutral space. I believe this project worked because it enabled men to be a positive resource to their children's learning through quality time and it was delivered in a dad friendly way" OCC

PARENTING SKILLS FOR MALE CARERS



Oxfordshire Parenting Forum commissioned the report, *'From the margins to the mainstream'* in 2014. This report looked at the availability and effectiveness of parenting skills programmes for male carers in the county. This is a summary of its findings.

Key findings

- ◆ National research shows that parenting programmes delivered in a father-inclusive manner are more effective with men and improve family outcomes.
- ◆ A previous OPF report found when workers in Oxfordshire settings chose to deliver programmes in a father-inclusive manner these improved family outcomes.
- ◆ The Early Intervention Hub Directory accepted OPF's report findings and in 2014 recommended their services should deliver programmes in a father-inclusive manner.
- ◆ OCC strategic leads will need to adopt a similar approach if it wants to ensure evidence based programmes it commissions get delivered in a father-inclusive manner.
- ◆ 'Man Enough' is shown to be effective with male carers and continues to be run in Oxfordshire by Action For Children. OCC does not currently commission the 'Man Enough' programme.

Background

OPF commissioned the report as part of its 3 year funding from the Wates Foundation. The report's aims were to examine whether fathers were taking part in local parenting programmes, whether programmes were being effective, and what father-inclusive strategies were in place to encourage men to access these programmes so this practice became mainstreamed.



Rationale for including men in parenting programmes

The report examined national research to establish the rationale for including male carers in programmes:

- Delivering parenting skills programmes to fathers improves outcomes for families.
- Fathers can be just as effective change agents as mothers and should be included in services.
- Services are more effective if they engage with fathers as much as mothers by adopting a whole family approach.
- Evidence based parenting interventions are not necessarily father-inclusive, are not being evaluated for their impact with men and may require adapting to be effective with men.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- In a period of budget cuts, family services have not been able to regularly deliver parenting programmes for fathers and all male groups, due to pressure to meet competing priorities and support mothers as regular users. Service managers will need to ensure programmes are delivered differently to ensure the whole family, including separated fathers, access them.
- OCC managers may need to remove barriers such as workers being reluctant to adapt their working hours to deliver father-inclusive programmes in the evening.
- If OCC were to provide father-inclusive training for its staff, evidence based programmes can be delivered more effectively with men, produce more outcomes and save the local authority money.
- OCC managers need to acknowledge the issue of its social workers preferring to refer men on Child Protection plans to the successful father-inclusive 'Man Enough' programme even though it is no longer on OCC's list of evidence based programmes.
- OCC do not hold reliable data to identify separated fathers or young fathers who could benefit from being signposted to programmes.
- A cultural shift is needed to remove unconscious bias against male carers, such as workers believing children benefit more when parented by a female carer than a male carer and consequently do not outreach fathers or refer them to parenting skills programmes.

■ Services need to make their programmes gender-differentiated if they want to be father-inclusive and be more effective.

■ Parenting programmes for men are an equality and legislative requirement and a safeguarding issue.

■ Local authorities in the UK are not being cost effective due to their delivery of parenting programmes that ignore men and waste money.

"Fathers who attend parenting courses tend to do more with their children afterwards and do it better and their babies and toddlers also develop faster and better, including developing higher IQ's."

'Five Minute Facts' - The Fatherhood Institute, 2005

"Projects have been encouraged to work with a whole family approach. The greatest successes have been those involving the whole family in interventions. Successful projects have avoided more 'formal' approaches."

'Improving Futures Programme', Parenting UK, 2013

"To deliver good outcomes for fathers conventional programmes will need to adapt content, methods and goals."

'Fatherhood: parenting programmes and policy - Mcallister F, Burgess A, 2012.

The Equality Act, Healthy Child Programme & The Children and Families Act 2014:

UK legislation states that Local Authorities are required to provide services that include male carers and courts will take account of the principle that both parents should continue to be involved in their children's lives.

Factors that make the delivery of a programme father-inclusive:

The report highlighted a range of parenting programmes available in Oxfordshire. These included both male carer only groups and mixed gender groups. It examined the different delivery approaches of these programmes. It identified the factors that make a programme be father-inclusive or have barriers to being father-inclusive.



THE FACTORS THAT MAKE A PROGRAMME FATHER-INCLUSIVE	THE BARRIERS TO A PROGRAMME BEING FATHER-INCLUSIVE
Evidence based materials that are delivered with 'fidelity' and are also delivered using father-inclusive strategies.	When a programme relies solely on evidence based materials and fidelity but does not attempt to deliver these in a father-inclusive manner or use father inclusive strategies.
Delivered solely to an all male carer group.	Delivered to a majority of female carers.
Delivered at times that is suitable for men to attend, such as evening times or weekend mornings.	Delivered at times to suit workers needs and female carers, such as day times in the week.
Delivered by competent male facilitators sensitive to the needs and inclusion of men.	Delivered by male facilitators who are not sensitive to the needs and inclusion of men.
Delivered by competent female facilitators sensitive to the needs and inclusion of men.	Delivered by female facilitators who are not sensitive to the needs and inclusion of men.
An appropriate programme length for men, as infrequent users of services, that they can commit to without feeling pressure.	Programme length is too long for men to feel they can commit to, having had little experience of attending services previously.
Includes an acknowledgement of male parenting perspectives & concepts of fatherhood or masculinities.	Delivered in an overly female gendered environment and style and does not recognise concepts of fatherhood or masculinities.
Includes discussing hopes and fears, such as men feeling judged or inadequate for attending a programme	Does not include discussing hopes and fears, such as men feeling judged or inadequate for attending a programme
Offers an opportunity for male carer support in the group.	Does not offer an opportunity for male carer support in the group.
Simple enough to understand and flexible enough to be put into practice, such as supporting the needs of separated fathers who may not have regular contact with their child.	Overly complicated to understand and too rigid to be put into practice, such as not supporting the needs of separated fathers who may not have regular contact with their child.
Inclusive of a diversity of men, such as young fathers who may prefer parenting support or their own peer group programme.	Not delivered in a way that includes a diversity of men, such as young fathers who will abstain from regular group sessions.
Able to support men with limited literacy skills with video clips etc & offers bi-lingual translations for BME male carers	Unable to support men with limited literacy skills with video clips etc & offer bi-lingual translations for BME male carers.
Pro-active encouragement of male participation and discussion in the group.	Does not ask for male participation and is delivered in an overly standardised way, so men feel 'talked at'.

Made available regularly and at the 'time of need'. Men can access support when required either at their own local setting or another setting that has 'clustered' its services. This ensures the maximum amount of men can attend the limited services that are available to them.	Not made regularly available and at the 'time of need'. Men are signposted to a non father-inclusive programme they do not want and are reluctant to attend as it is the only option made available to them.
Made available locally in accessible venues within easy travelling distance. This ensures men are included in their own local settings.	Not made available within reasonable travelling distance so men feel excluded from their local setting. This perpetuates a setting being unable to offer father-inclusive services.

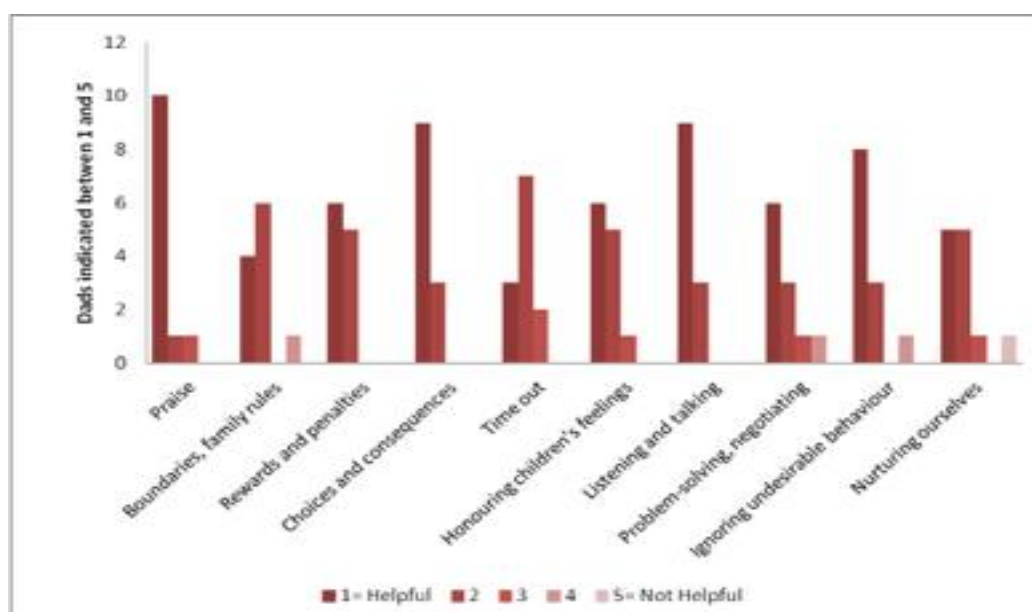
Case studies of father-inclusive programmes in Oxfordshire

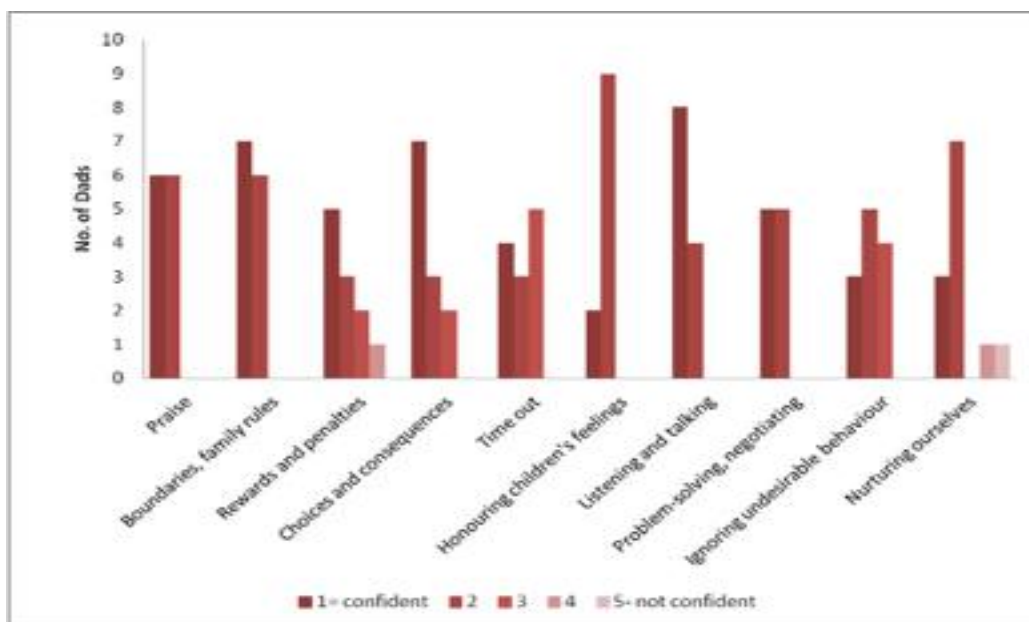
The report identified 5 parenting programmes delivered in a father-inclusive manner:

- Family Links for Dads
- Parent Talk (Take 3 for Dads)
- Webster-Stratton Workshops for Dads
- PEEPLE for Dads
- The Family Caring Trust for Dads (Man Enough)

Case Study 1: 'Family Links for Dads' at Grove & Faringdon Children's centre & Abingdon Hub

- Programme delivery from April to July 2013 with a follow up session in September 2013.
- Father-inclusive delivery, such as evening times and an all male carer group.
- Female facilitators who were motivated to work with men.
- 12 male carers attended the 10 weekly sessions.
- Men provided high user satisfaction and stated a range of positive outcomes.
- Men specified the programme benefitted from being an all male group and claimed they would not have attended the programme if to had been delivered mainly to mothers.
- 10 out of 12 dads found that the session about 'praise' was most helpful.
- 9 out of 12 dads found 'choices and consequences' and 'listening and talking' helpful.
- 7 dads felt very confident with 'boundaries and family rules' and 'choices and consequences'.





Key comments by male carers on outcomes:

"Becoming a lot more aware of others' feelings and now able to put strategies in place."

"My son and I are speaking a lot more rather than shouting."

"Trying to give more praise, be less critical, more empathetic, and ignoring more of the little stuff."

"I am more calm and consistent with praise and discipline."

"I liked the visualisation exercise, I think this is something I will try when feeling angry or stressed."

"Will be more aware of my kids personal space and try to respect it more."

"I think it works so well because it's a Dads' only group as I don't think they would have been so open in a mixed group. I too have found it the best group that I have run. I have been amazed at how much feedback and how honest they have been about their feelings from week one. They engage totally with the programme and when they challenge us about anything its always in a positive way."

Carole Gough, Family Support Worker,
Grove & Faringdon CC

Key comments by male carers on programme delivery:

"Enjoyed being with group, felt people listened to me." "Very useful, will recommend to other dads."

"If a mixed group, men might sit back and let women come forward with ideas"

"Really open, friendly and supportive. I have really enjoyed the whole course, much of it is due to the group dynamics."

"The group was so diverse." "Full of praise to the facilitators." "Should be run more often!"

"The commitment shown by the group was amazing, with a lot of the dads working very long hours, and also having to do a lot of travelling, one dad even worked a shift, attended family links and then went back to do a night shift. The Dads that attended were adamant that they felt the group benefitted from it being a dads only group, as they felt they were able to be more open than if their spouses or other mums were in the group. This has been the best FLNP I have run. The groups are courteous, respectful, inquisitive, open, challenging in all the expected and fair ways, reflective and very well engaged in the programme - participation is not a challenge. I would do another Dads' group again in a heart beat. The easiest to engage, keep engaged and the most positive feedback (about the strategies and course) I have ever received." Clare Warland, Community Hub Worker, South West Oxfordshire

Case Study 2: 'Webster-Stratton Workshops for Dads' at Grandpont Children's Centre

- A previous Webster-Stratton programme delivered at the centre by female staff in the daytime had been attended by 10 female carers and only 1 male carer.
- Having previously delivered the Family Caring Trust programme for men, the centre's Dads worker wanted to deliver the Webster-Stratton programme in a father-inclusive manner to see if more men would attend next time.
- The workshops were intended as a 'gateway' for more fathers to access parenting advice at the centre. A total of 34 different male carers attended the 8 workshops with an average of 8 dads at each monthly session between 2012-2013.
- Workshops were delivered by a male and female facilitator, in evening times, to all male carer group, with access to follow up advice and support from the Dads worker.
- Variety of fathers accessed the workshops, including separated dads, young dads, BME dads, dads with a disability and dads referred from Social care.
- An additional introduction workshop was delivered that focussed on the benefits to children's outcomes from fathers positive involvement, a film was shown celebrating fatherhood and a group discussion acknowledged men's particular parenting styles.
- Fidelity to an evidence based programme was maintained through the sole use of Webster-Stratton materials, activities, group discussions, handouts and assessment forms.
- Follow up work by the Dads worker with men who attended the workshops, led to 3 significant one-to-one case loads. This included a male carer self referring themselves to the 'Making Changes' perpetrator programme and gaining unsupervised access to their child for the first time, a separated BME male carer receiving mediation support and a qualification in Childcare and a male carer with disabilities gaining voluntary work and occupational therapy support. As a consequence, the 5 children of these carers experienced either a reduction in risk or an increase in resource from their male carers.
- Follow up assessments 6 months later showed that men who attended the workshops had improved parenting skills. This was seen with 'point increase' scores in 6 areas of parenting.



Carer 1: replied a significant 3 point increase of 'never having to raise his voice to his child'.

Carer 2: replied point increases in 'when asking my child to do something, seeing it through' & 'listening to his child's point of view'.

Carer 3: replied a significant 4 point increase in his overall relationship with his child.

Carer 4: replied point increases in all aspects of the 6 areas.

Carer 5: replied point increases in all aspect of the 6 areas.

Key comments by the male carers tracked 6 months after the workshops:

"The power of positive praise has been so useful. I now feel that I can encourage my son's best behaviour rather than have confrontations."

"Meal times are now easier too and I feel prepared for tantrums when they start."

"I came away with new strategies that benefitted my parenting and I have had good conversations with my wife."



"I feel more in control and less stressed when spending time with my son doesn't go as I'd like. I feel that I have more tools, the time we spend together is less fractious."

"The sessions helped confirm what we were doing well as well as clarifying where we could improve especially around difficult issues like tantrums, discipline and meal time problems."

Key comments by male carers on 'father-inclusive' interventions:

The sessions were very father-inclusive and were for all the fathers who attended. There is a different dynamic when a group is just for dads and it useful to know that there are other fathers out there."

"By having it in an evening, with other dads and being invited by a dad's worker was significant, i possibly would not have come otherwise."

"It was valuable to learn about other dad's experiences and get advice on the issues we face with our children."

"More discussion groups like these where dads get to go and talk would be welcome."

"I have worked as a trained facilitator of Webster-Stratton for many years through both Parentline Plus and Oxfordshire Parenting Forum delivering The Whole Family Programme 'Dinosaur School' as well as the stand alone programme. To be invited to work solely with dads/male carers was an exciting prospect for me as I had often found it challenging to engage men on a programme and this was a great opportunity to try to understand why this was as well as deliver some terrific material to them. The pilot we delivered was a huge success with an average of eight men attending each session which more than doubled what I would expect from a mixed programme. The men had a strong sense of ownership of the group and a real feeling around supporting each other week after week in exercises with valuable group discussions working towards building their confidence to take more responsibility in parenting. We created a safe environment for the men to speak openly, to offer support to one another and at times disclose some real challenges. I believe this to be mainly due to the male only environment which proved to be very effective. The men felt other male carers would like to attend in schools & Children's centres throughout the county." Paula Evans, Programme facilitator



Case study 3: PEEPLE for Dads at South Abingdon Children's Centre

- Previously, it had been mainly mothers who had attended the centre's post-natal sessions after the birth. The worker felt another strategy was needed to engage fathers of babies. The centre wanted to develop a 'whole family approach' and include both carers to increase the outcomes for families.
- The centre surveyed mothers and male carers at ante-natal and mixed gender PEEPLE sessions for babies to find out if there would be interest in a male carer only PEEPLE group. Dads stated they were more likely to attend after the birth if there were sessions that were designed to be father-inclusive.
- The centre already had an established Saturdads group with fathers attending with their older toddlers. It was decided to run a new PEEPLE session on Saturday mornings for men only with babies. Weekend delivery meant that fathers who had returned to work after the birth could still access the centre.

- The sessions were led by the centre's lead teacher who had been trained in PEEPLE. She was aware of the benefits to a baby's development by including the father. The 1 hour sessions used PEEPLE baby parenting materials, focussing on singing times, story times, child development, bonding advice for fathers and practical baby tips at home.
- The 6 week course started in 2014. This attended by 5 male carers and their babies between 0-1 years. The centre extended the programme into a rolling 2 and a half hour baby PEEPLE session every Saturday morning as demand grew from local fathers.
- Male carers provided positive feedback about skills they learnt and the benefits of having an all male group.
- Male carers with babies went onto access the centre's other father-inclusive sessions, as their babies became toddlers.
- Dads who attended the original PEEPLE sessions now attend the centre's ante-natal sessions to explain to new fathers about the benefits of attending the group and accessing the centre after the birth.
- From 2013-2014, the reach of male carers at the centre almost doubled and the volume of male carers almost trebled.



Increased reach and volume of male carers after PEEPLE:

Volume of male carers from March 2013 - June 2013 = 32

Volume of male carers from March 2014 - June 2014 = 90

Reach of male carers from March 2013 - June 2013 = 24

Reach of male carers from March 2014 - June 2014 = 42

Male carer feedback on PEEPLE for Dads:

"It has been very useful to meet other dads who are going through the same experiences and the different approaches that they take."

"I feel as a dad, better educated about how to play and learn with my child."

"It enables me to spend quality time in a friendly environment, which builds my confidence about looking after the baby."

"I felt my relationship has improved, it is more secure and more enjoyable for me to do things with my child."

"Coming to the PEEPLE programme has made a difference as my baby has become more interactive and interested in the objects around him, feeling the textures and seeing the colours of objects"

"The ideas being discussed have been widely implemented at home and have been effective. I have learnt some of the clues given off also the learning requirements of my baby."

Facilitator reflections:

- Offering a male only group on a Saturday was key to creating an inclusive and accessible space for male carers to spend time with their babies.
- Greater links need to be developed with statutory agencies such as Health Visitors and Social Care. This would mean sessions can benefit targeted male carers, such as men seeking a venue for court ordered contact with their babies or on C.P. Plans.
- The worker is keen that PEEPLE for dads continues to be commissioned by OCC.
- It is a requirement of PEEPLE training that facilitators delivery sessions to male carers. The worker is keen for facilitators to deliver programmes with men at more settings.

"The PEEPLE programme for Dads has been a great way to get more dads with babies involved in the centre."

Lucinda Cave, PEEPLE facilitator,
South Abingdon CC



Case study 4: Family Caring Trust for Dads/'Man Enough' at multiple venues



Man Enough is a parenting programme delivered in a father-inclusive manner. It is delivered at multiple venues in Oxfordshire just for male carers. It uses evidence based materials from the Family Caring Trust. Man Enough was originally set up in 1998 by the late Albert Ford.

Initially the course was delivered in Bullingdon Prison, a Young Offender Institution and a drug rehabilitation centre. In 2007, Albert relaunched the programme at Elms Road Children's centre as a response to the lack of parenting programmes for men in the county. The Programme continues to be run for groups of up to 12 male carers from a range of backgrounds, including separated fathers, BME fathers, Young fathers & Grandfathers. The 7/8 week sessions, delivered in the evening by male practitioners have been consistently well attended by fathers. Dads often champion the course to other fathers at 'taster' sessions at other Sure Start Centres. Albert continued to deliver the programme and champion fatherhood until his death in 2012. His loss created a challenge for those working with men who wanted to keep his work going but at the same time bring the father-inclusive practices that he had developed into mainstream early years practice.

"For Albert it wasn't simply about fathers learning parenting skills, he wanted them to develop confidence and self-awareness in their role as fathers. Albert believed strongly that men simply do not appreciate how important they are—physically and emotionally—to their children, a misapprehension society underlines with its emphasis on motherhood as the prime parenting force. Albert realised that there were thousands of other dads, together or separated, around the country feeling denied the chance to be involved in their children's lives. Albert wanted dads to feel they could bring up their children on an equal footing with their mothers, sharing the excitement of growing, playing and learning together." Chris Sewell, OPF

Mark Ginsburg facilitation - Mark who co-facilitated the programme with Albert has continued to deliver the programme across Oxfordshire at various early years settings. These have included Elms road Children's Centre, Marston Children's Centre and The Leys Children's Centre.

In 2015 Mark delivered the programme twice at South Abingdon Children's Centre when it was commissioned by Action For Children and Sovereign Housing Association. This reflected its increased popularity - and benefit of being available to dads from across the County: for example one father travelled from near Reading. The course starting with 11, ending with 9 following 2 drop outs from social care referrals. 8 men attended the additional/eighth celebration and spirituality week - which they especially requested - and thereby completed evaluation forms.



Mark was able to link their evaluations with an assessment of the change in their parenting. One of these had struggled with the misbehaviours of his five year old, and caused an accident which broke his son's wrist. He found *"hearing that other dads had similar/worse problems is motivating"*. The message he received was *"we know how hard it is: don't be too hard on yourself"*. He *"found the course to be of great help when I could not find a solution to my realisation that I was not the best dad I could be"*. Realistically he did not feel in the few weeks of the course that his son's behaviours were transformed - but he did feel that his own response had, and that eventually his son would respond to that change.

Another father - whose 15 year old daughter had been self-harming and overdosed - thought *"I'm now more aware of how my behaviour affects my children's perceptions of the way that they should behave"*, and that the course *"gave me a better picture of what I should be doing, even if I'm not always good at applying it"*. He was however cautious attributing to improvements in his daughter's behaviours (*"things are a little better"*) to this programme, since she had recently started DBT.

A father with a 7 year old son with learning difficulties was also impressed at how much he gained from the course (*"learning about being a father"*), and wanted to *"make people understand that there are courses on parenting and their tremendous value. Can also be socially fun and entertaining"*. Resulting from the course, he highlighted his son has *"begun to listen more, and therefore our relationship has improved"*, since he feels the course *"helped me understand my son"* and he has been *"responding more positively"*, so *"now [he is] better able to cope"*.

One father attended the course for the third time, reflecting his own difficulties with learning. A veteran of a number of other parenting classes, he thought *"the male group is better, as dads can be themselves more in a male environment - bit more relaxed: bit on guard with ladies there - the mixed groups are ok, but I find ladies are more judgemental"*, which highlights the course's inclusive approach to families with social care involvement. His son's behaviours did sound calmer by the end of the course.

The four remaining fathers were not involved with social care, and the benefit they found was more marginal. e.g. *"it has given me a few extra tools to help develop my son"*; *"I found talking with the other dads and sharing experiences helpful and rewarding"*. Another felt it had *"given me confidence in my parenting"* and *"helping me with ways of talking to my daughter"*. The third felt the course helped improve his *"understanding of his son and aware of what they need"*, and improved *"discipline without nagging"*, reducing *"bad attention"*.

The final participant achieved *"more in control of my own behaviour during episodes of bad behaviour"* - or as his wife emailed me: *"Hope this finds you well. This is A's wife- I just want to say how effective your parenting course has been. I've seen positive subtle changes in A with regards to the kids; esp with our eldest M. Its been lovely to watch him handle situations more calmly and*

diplomatically i.e giving M choices rather than just reprimanding etc. keep up the good work!
Regards, R."

The course was also notable in recruiting three participants from south Asian backgrounds. In the additional spiritual week, views were shared of Muslim, Sikh and Christian religious perspectives.

Whilst Mark was disappointed not to have sustained involvement of every referral from social care, he still does not know of a more accessible course for vulnerable fathers. He believes this would be aided through closer liaison with social care, for example through offering transport at least for the first week (until lift-sharing can be established).

This emphasis on supporting vulnerable fathers remains a delicate balance however, since at least one father reported being alarmed at the introduction being *"told about the legal responsibility to report abuse etc"*. Fortunately he *"liked the personality, friendly and down-to-earth style of delivery"*, with everyone positive about its *"good rhythm"*; *"well-humoured and very open minded"*; *"relaxed and easy going approach, and it was easy for them to draw us out"*.

In 2016, Mark delivered the programme for the Red Kite Children's Centre in Thame which was attended by 8 male carers. A further programme is planned for April 2016 at South Abingdon Children's Centre.

Elms road Children's centre:

The Children's Centre commissioned 7 Man Enough programmes over several years in order to target male carers. This was based on the assumption that men have a different experience of parenting to women and are more likely to attend an all male environment. Evening delivery time enabled working men to attend. The sessions were advertised widely through social care and Children's Centres who referred or signposted dads. A range of male carers with different experiences attended. Weekly evaluations and pre & post evaluations were completed based on the course materials. The male carers liked the fact that it was a male only group and that it was facilitated by men. Most responded well to the materials, although a couple with literacy problems found the text of the material difficult to read and the DVD clips were a little dated. All of the dads who completed felt more confident about using a range of positive parenting strategies.



Attendance at Elms Road up to 2012:

Course 1 = 5 dads, 4 completed
Course 2 = 9 dads, 9 completed
Course 3 = 7 dads, 2 completed
Course 4 = 15 dads, 8 completed
Course 5 = 8 dads, 5 completed
Course 6 = 11 dads, 9 completed
Course 7 = 15 dads, 12 completed
Total = 49 male carers completed

Elms road CC male carer feedback:

"The programme was run brilliantly and my children are just a lot more happier. I feel a lot better in my self. I have seen what I have to improve on thanks to this course."

"It has helped me massively and it has opened up my relationship with my children, which has become closer. I enjoyed the camaraderie and inspiring leaders. I think the course ought to be more widely available."

"I felt the course was well run, well planned and thought out and well delivered. It has helped me with keeping calmer in stressful situations and dealing with bad behaviour and tantrums."

"I particularly enjoyed learning from other dads and their ways of dealing with problems."

"Due to the course I spend more quality time with the kids and it has helped me to be stronger in myself as a father"

"Just in the few weeks since the course i think the relationship with the child i look after has improved and i can see a happier future. I'll recommend it to others."

The programme has also been run by Early Intervention Hub workers in group work and by a Dads worker 1:1 when requested by social care referrals and south Asian fathers with ESOL.

Early Intervention Hub worker comments:

"As an introduction to getting dads into the Hub and getting them to think about changing their behaviours the programme is really accessible. It feels like a good preventative intervention. Having a male only group does offer something that a mixed group doesn't as the men seemed a lot more relaxed and willing to open up and they really appreciated the space to think about their parenting role without feeling judged. It was also a great way to get 2 hours a week for 8 weeks with some men who may otherwise be reluctant to engage and offer them some support. There have been calls by dads and Social Care for us to run the programme again. I think it should be offered twice a year in the Hubs so it becomes readily available. The materials are inexpensive, but very effective."

Bicester Early Intervention Hub

Feb 2012 = 5 dads completed

Feb 2013 = 8 dads completed

Marston Children's Centre

June 2013 = 5 dads completed

South Abingdon Children's Centre

2014 = 7 dads completed

2015 = 8 dads completed

Grandpont Children's Centre

2013-2015 = 6 BME dads and social care referrals completed 1:1

"I was keen to develop my parenting skills and the Dads worker was able to contact the publishers in order to get hold of a Bengali translation of the text. We then met weekly 1:1 so we could complete the course. We had lots of smiles and funny moments trying to communicate as fathers. I believe this course has greatly benefited my relationship with my daughter as I have become more aware of her need. I am very happy." BME separated father

OPF's report findings

The report findings were shared with a range of practitioners and service commissioners at meetings. These included Oxfordshire Parenting Forum meetings, Oxfordshire Fathers' Champion Network meetings, Children's Centre Lead meetings and Early Intervention Service 'Thematic Group for parenting programmes' meetings.

Statements from the Early Intervention Service Directory, 2014

The latest Early Intervention Service Directory, published in 2014, accepted Oxfordshire Parenting Forum's report findings that parenting programmes were not being delivered in a father-inclusive manner and may need to be adapted to be more effective with men. The Directory includes the statements:

"We recognise that the programme across the year has biased a particular gender group to the detriment of a whole family approach."

"The Early Intervention Service must be proactive about making their programmes accessible to targeted groups (including male carers and other carers who are underrepresented in accessing programmes), and to refining the delivery of the programme accordingly without undermining programme fidelity."

"Some services are already exploring use of single gendered groups and using additional introduction taster sessions geared toward particular people to encourage participation."

Recommendations from the Early Intervention Service Directory, 2014

1. Parenting programmes are to be delivered twice a year at each setting.
2. Parenting programmes are to be delivered in evening times.
3. Parenting programmes are to be whole-family focussed and include fathers.
4. Parenting programmes are to be clustered where this can be more effective.
5. Parenting programmes are to be offered to single gendered groups.
6. Pro-active refining of the delivery of programmes is required to encourage participation.



Oxfordshire County Council's Key Performance Indicators

OCC's Key Performance Indicators state settings are required to engage with male carers, provide them with effective programmes and evaluate their effectiveness:

KPI #2 *"Increase the numbers and % of the following target groups living in the children's centre catchment that are reached by any centre: workless families, BME, lone parents, fathers"*

KPI #7 *"Increase number and % of families that have a positive outcome from an intervention that promotes early child/parent interaction and communication e.g PEEP, Webster Stratton Incredible Years, Family Links."*

KPI #7 *"Centres will need to record the numbers of parents attending courses, Centres will need to collate evaluations to show the difference made from pre course evaluations to end of course evaluations"*

Despite this guidance, the OPF report found OCC continues to commission parenting programmes that are not delivered in a father-inclusive manner. OCC employees are not offered adequate father-inclusive training and OCC early years leads, unlike early intervention leads in 2014, have not yet recommended that settings deliver programmes in a father-inclusive manner.

Oxfordshire County Council's statutory duty to safeguard children

"Across the UK, Government policy and legislation require providers to engage with fathers. There is evidence that failure to engage with fathers compromises service delivery to mothers and children, at times putting them at risk."

The Fatherhood Institute's guidance on effective parenting interventions with fathers, 2009.

In its new integrated service model of Children and Family Centres in 2017, Oxfordshire County Council may want to ensure it includes both carers in its parenting interventions in order to protect children on Child Protection and Child In Need Plans. Research shows the delivery of effective parenting programmes that include vulnerable fathers, such as those on C.P and C.I.N plans can increase the safeguarding of children and reduces risk. The delivery of father-inclusive programmes would ensure OCC meets the Equality Act, Healthy Child Programme and the Children's and Families Act 2014 and is working to safeguard children.

"Children at risk of social problems, poverty and maternal drug use, talk and learn better when their fathers provide financial support, engage in nurturing play and are satisfied with parenting."

Why Dads Matter, The Fatherhood Institute 2010.

Research shows participation by vulnerable fathers in parenting interventions leads to:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of child development.
- Increased confidence in their parenting skills more sensitive and positive parenting.
- Greater involvement in infant and child care.
- Paternal care of infants and young children by males from unpromising backgrounds can facilitate productive engagement with family and society.
- Child-mother attachment more secure when child-father attachment is secure.
- Fathers' behaviour and beliefs impact on mothers' behaviour: father's understanding of benefits of breastfeeding strongly connected with mother's likelihood of commencing and maintaining breastfeeding.

A selection of the report's final recommendations

OPF's 2014 report on parenting skills programmes for male carers made a series of recommendations. The author of this report recommends that OCC strategic leads now revisit these and consider putting these into action in order to deliver a whole family approach in its new service model in 2017.



Father-inclusive strategies:

"For evidence based programmes to be most effective for men, they should be delivered in either male carer only groups or mixed groups where the settings have used father-inclusive strategies as detailed in this report."

"Fathers should be entitled to choose between a male carer only group and a mixed group and settings should provide both of these."

"Father-inclusive training should be provided by the County to enable facilitators to deliver evidence based programmes in more father-inclusive ways."

"In order to ensure that parenting programmes are delivered at times when fathers are most likely to attend, staff should be available for work in evening and weekend times."

Commissioning of programmes:

"Oxfordshire County Council should evaluate its current use of mixed-group and whole-family programmes in order to establish whether the evidence based programmes it currently commissions are delivered effectively with male carers"

"All setting seeking to engage targeted men should follow the lead of Early Intervention Hubs in committing to the delivery of at least one and preferably two male carer only group interventions per year, as outlined in the 2014 EIHub directory on parenting programmes."

Safeguarding and Targeting fathers:

"Settings should offer one-to-one support to targeted male carers by trained fathers workers after they have attended a parenting programme. This would consolidate gains achieved on the programme, help to evaluate outcomes and increase the safeguarding of children."

"In cases where young fathers separate from their child's mother and discontinue accessing support from The Family Nurse Partnership, they should be encouraged by access other settings that can offer post-natal parenting programmes, PEEPLE and Baby Massages sessions. A data protocol for the FNP and other settings to share information on young fathers is required to facilitate more effective joint practice with these vulnerable male carers"

Championing fathers work:

"Senior managers, service commissioners and members of Oxfordshire Parenting Forum involved in this report should agree to meet to disseminate the findings, in order that suitable changes to policy with regards to father-inclusive practice can be actioned."

RELATIONSHIP & WELLBEING WORKSHOPS FOR DADS



Jackie Nevin, an experienced Family Group Conference worker was commissioned by Grandpont Children's Centre to pilot a series of workshops for fathers in 2014. The 'Journey for Dads' workshops were designed to help male carers maintain healthy relationships with their partners and children and support them with their wellbeing. This is a summary of the pilot's findings.

Key findings

- ◆ The pilot was delivered to meet a service gap to help vulnerable men to become positive resources for their children.
- ◆ It used evidence-based materials and was delivered in a father-inclusive way.
- ◆ Men gave high user satisfaction and positive feedback and increased scores on post programme evaluations.
- ◆ Male carers' and children's outcomes improved with an increase in the men's wellbeing and management of their behaviours.
- ◆ Male carers stated that the workshops should be offered to more men.

Background

The centre was already committed to working with a number of vulnerable male carers through its family support work delivered by the Dads worker. This included working with separated fathers to have contact with their children, reducing fathers in conflict with partners and ex-partners, supporting fathers with their mental health needs and risky behaviours and working with social care and fathers on their TAC, Child In Need and Child Protection plans. The centre felt there was a service gap in the therapeutic support available for male carers attending Children's Centre across the county. The Centre decided to design a series of pilot workshops that combined the promotion of healthy relationships, communication skills, parenting skills and wellbeing ideas for men. The aim was to improve outcomes for families, reduce risky behaviours and reduce the likelihood of lower risk families moving onto Child Protection plans. The Children's Centre commissioned Jackie Nevin, an experienced counsellor, to design and co-facilitate a total of 8 weekly pilot workshops. These were delivered at the Centre from 7pm-9pm in the evening so that working men could access them. The pilot was evaluated for its effectiveness in producing positive outcomes for male carers, partners, ex-partners and children.



Male carer target groups

Types of fathers who self referred included separated fathers, BME fathers, fathers with mental health needs and a father with Aspergers. All the men had accessed family services before,

How was it father friendly?

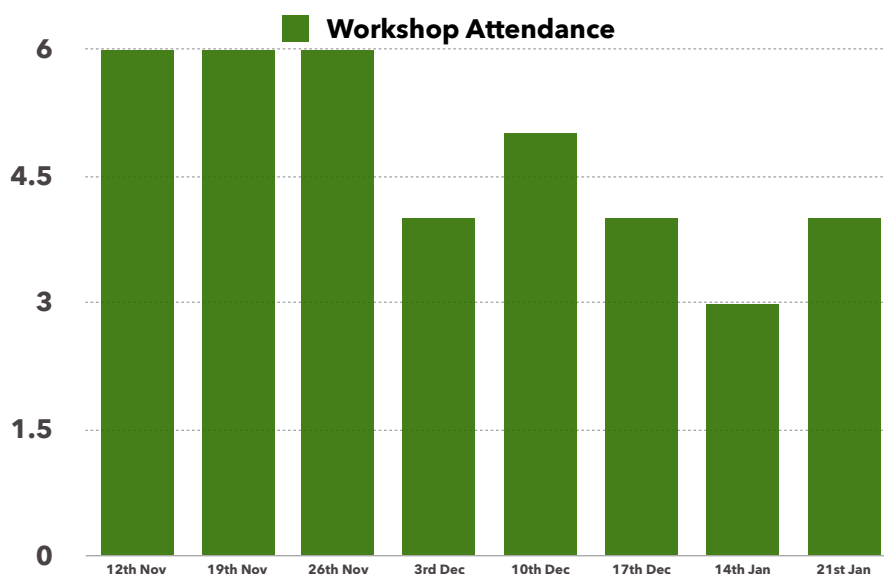
- The pilot was specifically designed to meet a service gap of fathers needing therapeutic support.
- The workshops were offered to dads only, in the evening, when working dads could attend, and were co-facilitated by a male Dads worker and a female worker experienced in working with the whole family.
- The workshops focussed on the positive values of fatherhood and improved outcomes this could provide for their children.
- Male carers gave positive feedback about being able to discuss personal issues in a closed dads group.
- On completion, several male carers were offered 1:1 support with the male Dads worker on their family and personal needs.



including CAFCASS, MIND, Relate, social care, mediation services, parenting programmes and contact centres. Some men had received 1:1 family support at the centre or were on a TAC or a Child In Need Plan. The centre did not offer any places to men on Child Protection Plans, men with high risk behaviours or men requiring a specific perpetrator programme such as 'Making Changes'. This was to avoid unnecessary duplication and the need to provide additional resources to safeguard partners and children at risk of domestic abuse.

Attendance

Facilitators completed pre-course assessments for 8 men. Although they were tempted to make the pilot as large as possible for evaluation purposes, this was considered the maximum capacity for group work with men with more complex needs. At the start of the workshops, 2 of the men realised they needed 1:1 work to crisis manage their current family situations. These men were supported and signposted to services. During the workshops a male carer presented with specific mental health needs and completed the programme outside the group on a 1:1 basis. 1 father who missed sessions due to illness completed the materials 1:1 later. In total 5 men completed the 'closed group' workshops and post programme evaluations.



Workshop design & delivery

When designing the delivery of the workshops the facilitators met on several occasions to discuss and source specific content. The facilitators were keen to use evidence based materials so chose recognised approaches, exercises and evaluation tools already used in Oxfordshire County Council work to deliver family support. Some additional materials from MIND, RELATE and Duluth's perpetrator programme were incorporated. The facilitators ensured that the workshops were delivered in a father-inclusive manner by making them male only, delivered them in the evening when working fathers could attend and were co-facilitated by the centre's male Dads worker.

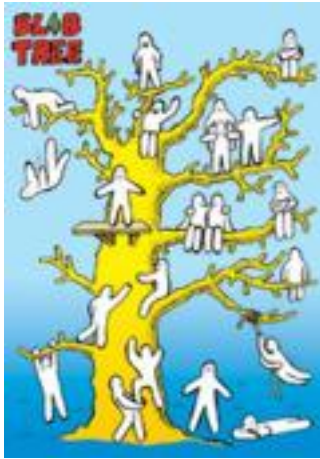
Aims of the Workshops

- To enable male carers to resolve conflict between a partner or ex-partner and reduce levels of tension experienced by their children.
- To enable male carers to develop emotional literacy, self awareness and honesty when reflecting on their relationships and parenting skills.
- To enable male carers to examine where their beliefs come from and how these influence behaviours which impact on their partners and children.
- To enable male carers to develop effective communication and empathy skills.
- To enable male carers to take ownership of their actions and have respectful relationships with partners, ex-partners and their children.
- To enable male carers to set achievable, sustainable goals that focus on their wellbeing and the improved outcomes of their children.
- To enable male carers to seek further family support if required after the workshops.

The workshops were designed with a specific structure. Sessions started with check-ins, facilitators then introduced and explained the weekly theme, leading into a group discussion. Themed discussions were solution based and were aimed at increasing the men's self awareness of their behaviours, needs and responsibilities as carers and partners. After a break, the men completed the weekly group exercise, with the option of role play, and finished with check outs and weekly evaluation forms.

Workshop weekly themes & content

- **Week 1 - "Introduction to course"**: pre-course evaluations, name game ice-breaker exercise, 'graffiti wall' hopes and fears exercise, how to do weekly check in & check out.
- **Week 2 - "Beliefs and Values"**: check in, group discussion on how we get our beliefs and values as male carers, 'time line' of significant life events exercise, check out.
- **Week 3 - "Communication and Listening"**: check in, group discussion on what is good communication in a healthy relationship, theme, 'role play' exercise of listening and validating feelings, check out.
- **Week 4 - "Being a good father & partner"**: check in, group discussion on theme of what qualities make a good father and partner, 'equality log' exercise demonstrating how to negotiate fairly and effective co-parenting, check out.
- **Week 5 - "Respectful behaviours & Anger styles"**: check in, group discussion on healthy relationships, resolving conflict and recognising anger styles, 'drama triangle' and 'time out' exercises to explain how to avoid escalation and abuse, check out.
- **Week 6 - "De-stress techniques & Wellbeing"**: check in, group discussion with invited practitioner on the benefits for fathers and their children by focussing on wellbeing, extended 'yoga, breathing & Mindfulness' physical exercises, check out.
- **Week 7 - "Hierarchy of Need & Transactional analysis"**: check in, group discussion on how to meet male carer's, partner's and children's needs, 'Jahari window' self awareness exercise to demonstrate what we disclose & what we hide, how we communicate this to others, check out.
- **Week 8 - "Achievable aims, next steps & feedback"**: check in, group discussion on SMART aims, signposting to services & one to one support, 'feedback & evaluation' group exercise, check out.



The blob tree:

- This evaluation tool was used to enable male carers to develop emotional literacy, self awareness and honesty when reflecting on their relationships and parenting skills.
- All the men marked themselves in improved positions on the tree at the end of the workshops:
- Carer 1's character moved from being alone to the top of the tree & helping the needs of others.
- Carer 2's character moved from being angry and defensive to being near the top and content.
- Carer 3's character moved from being passive to becoming engaged and supportive of others.

Supervision & evaluation tools

The Centre Manager and Area Manager supervised facilitators in their choice of materials, approaches and evaluations. The Centre Manager attended a designated workshop as an observer and to provide feedback to the facilitators as part of their supervision. The facilitators used a combination of pre-course, weekly and post-course evaluation tools in order to demonstrate any improved outcomes for the fathers, their partners and children:

◆ **'Blob tree'** pre-course image completed individually to evaluate current feelings as a person, a partner and a father. Repeated post course for signs of positive change.

◆ **'Graffiti wall'** group exercise completed in the first session using sticky notes and a group discussion to evaluate the men's aims for attending the workshops & their hopes and fears. Wall revisited in the last session to see if the men's aims had been met.

◆ **'Point scale survey'** completed pre course individually to evaluate specific areas, such as the men's relationships with their partner and their children. Survey repeated post course to measure any point increases in these areas on a 1-10 scale.

◆ **'Smiley face'** evaluations and comments forms completed individually each week, group feedback activity in final workshop.

Pre-course graffiti wall comments:



Weekly evaluations results:

Percentage figures were worked out for user satisfaction of the 8 workshops:

Q. How informative and useful was the session?

Participants who replied good or excellent **91%**

Q. How relevant was the topic?

Participants who replied good or excellent **94%**

Q. How suitable was the time, date, duration?

Participants who replied good or excellent **97%**

Q. How suitable was the venue and catering?

Participants who replied good or excellent **100%**

Q. How would you rate the facilitation?

Participants who replied good or excellent **97%**



'Journey for Dads' weekly evaluations

Session No: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Could you please take a few moments to complete this evaluation form? It will assist us in planning future events. Thank you.

	Poor /Not Suitable (1)	Don't I Know (2)	It was OK (3)	Good (4)	Excellent / Very Suitable (5)
How informative and useful was the session?					
How Relevant was the topic?					
How suitable was the time/date and duration?					
How suitable was the venue/catering					
How would you rate the facilitation/presentation?					

What did you hope to gain from the session today?

Tell us one thing you will take away from this session that you would put into practice at home or in your workplace.

End of workshop evaluation & feedback session:

The final workshop gave an opportunity for the male carers to reflect on any gains made during the previous 8 weeks. They completed written and verbal feedback of the whole course and a post course point increase survey from their pre course scores. This information is reproduced with the kind permission of the male carers.


CARER 1: His ability to manage his wellbeing went up by 2 points. His ability to manage his behaviours when stressed went up by 4 points. His confidence in getting to where he wants to be with his partner and child both went up by 2 points. His score for achieving his aims by attending the workshops was 8 out of 10.

CARER 2: The quality of his current relationship with his partner went up by 3 points. The quality of his parenting skills went up by 3 points. His ability to manage his mental wellbeing went up by 5 points and his ability to manage his behaviours when stressed by 6 points. His score for achieving his aims by attending was 9 out of 10.

CARER 3: The quality of his communication skills with his ex-partner went up by 1 point. His ability to manage his mental wellbeing went up by 1 point. His ability to manage his behaviours when stressed went up by 3 points. His confidence in getting to where he wanted to be with his ex-partner went up by 2 points. His score for achieving his aims by attending the workshops was 8 out of 10.

CARER 4: The quality of his communication skills with his partner and children both went up by 1 point. His ability to manage his wellbeing went up by 1 point. His ability to manage his behaviours when stressed went up by 2 points. His score for achieving his aims was 6 out of 10.

CARER 5: His confidence for getting to where he wanted to be with his children went up by 1 point. His score for achieving his aims by attending the workshops was 7 out of 10.



Grandpont
UNIVERSITY TECHNICAL & COMMERCIAL COLLEGE

'A Journey for Dads' workshops – Pre & Post assessments

Date: _____ Name: _____ Scale: 0 = POOR, 5 = OK, 10 = EXCELLENT

Where are you now? (Please circle)

On a scale of 0-10 how would you rate the quality of your current relationship with your:

1. Ex-partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
2. Current partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
3. Child/Children?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

On a scale of 0-10 how would you rate the quality of your communication skills with your:

1. Ex-partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
2. Current partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
3. Child/Children?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

On a scale of 0-10 how would you rate the quality of your parenting skills with your:

1. Child/children	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
-------------------	--------------------------------------------

On a scale of 0-10 how would you rate your ability to manage your:

1. Mental Wellbeing?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
2. Behaviours when stressed?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Where do you want to be?

On a scale of 0-10 how confident do you feel in getting to where you want to be with your:

1. Ex-partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
2. Current partner?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
3. Child/Children?	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How do I get there?

On a scale of 0-10 how has attending these workshops enabled you to achieve your goals:

0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10



Any further comments?

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 www: www.grandpontuniversity.ac.uk

Children's Centres
for learning & innovation

Workshop feedback:

Week 1

"It was good there was an introduction sessions at the start of the course to explain what the course was about and we could have some input into this."

Week 2

"I want to be a better dad and partner. I learnt that it's important to be more positive about things."

Week 2

"I wanted to learn about how my beliefs and values impact on my relationships. I learnt from the Time Line exercise how my past events have coloured my present situation."

Week 3

"I wanted to learn how to share things and develop my listening. I learnt it's important to work together with your partner."

Week 3

"I liked the role-playing exercise element of the session when we had to really listen to each other."

Week 2

"I think looking at our values and beliefs can help defuse things, rather than things escalating."

Week 4

"I thought it was a good session, having a male facilitator focussing on fatherhood and co-parenting."

Week 5

Week 4

"I wanted to get a better understanding of co-parenting now I am separated and I am the main carer of the two children. It was really productive to have the opportunity to talk. I gained confidence in making positive choices for my children."

Week 5

"It was good to have a session that looked at anger styles. I hadn't thought about this before."

Week 6

"I wanted to learn how to control my anger better. I learnt about how to talk better with my wife."

Week 5

"I wanted to improve conflict resolution with my ex-partner. I learnt how it could be used in my interactions."

Week 7

"I particularly liked the discussion on Maslow's Theory. It helps you look at the needs that you are neglecting. It's got me thinking about my own journey."

"I wanted to learn how to de-stress. I learnt how important it is to take deep breathes before reacting to things."

Week 6

"I really enjoyed the yoga session. It was different from the talking sessions. It was very good for me to have a reminder to look after myself and my well-being."

Week 8

"I wanted to look back and think about how I have improved after each session. I learnt how useful it is to reflect on these things."

Post workshop outcomes:

All the male carers who completed the workshops went onto receive some additional 1:1 support at the centre. This built on the learning within the workshops. The carers were tracked 6 months later and positive outcomes for themselves, their partners and children were recorded. At the request of the male carers these summaries have been anonymised prior to publication.

Case Study 2: 'Male carer of two children following a separation'.

Following a recent separation, the male carer was seeking practical and emotional support to care for his children full-time and to reduce conflict with his ex-partner. While attending the workshops he was observed developing his wellbeing & self esteem, improving his communication skills with his ex-partner and developing SMART aims for the future.

Following the workshops the male carer was offered one to one sessions to work through the practicals of returning to work part-time and caring for his children. Initially the carer was seeking an unrealistic dream job, but using SMART tools learnt on the workshop he has gained employment in a more achievable setting that fits around the needs of his children's care. The male carer continues to provide good parenting skills for his children. He has provided feedback of improved mental wellbeing and resolution with his ex-partner.

Case Study 1: 'Male carer with suspected Aspergers from an abusive family background.'

The male carer was in a relationship with the mother of a new baby who was being supported by multiple professionals as part of a Child In Need Plan. He had not yet engaged at the Children's Centre prior to the workshops and professionals were keen to ensure he became a resource to the child and partner rather than a risk. By attending the workshops, the male carer became more self-aware of his mental health needs and the risks of him developing controlling behaviours. Following the workshops, the Dads worker continued to engage and support him with one to one weekly sessions, completed a Family Star assessment and signposted him to services for his mental health needs and respectful behaviours. The male carer went onto receive a formal assessment for Aspergers, attended counselling sessions through his G.P. and registered himself for wellbeing sessions with MIND. He also completed a one to one parenting skills course at the centre. He found independent living & received Working Tax Credits. He then self-referred himself to the perpetrator programme, 'Making Changes'. It is the belief of the worker and male carer that one of the reasons why the family has managed to avoid moving onto a Child Protection Plan is the male carer's attendance.

Case Study 3: 'Male carer with unsupported mental health needs'.

The male carer had not previously attended the centre or been signposted to support, though the family had received some TAC support at another setting. During attendance of the workshops, the carer presented with some extremely challenging behaviour which could have disrupted the dynamic of the whole group. A decision was made by the facilitators that the group dynamic couldn't meet his individual needs. He was offered one to one support at the centre to encourage him to access the specialist services he required. The male carer then felt able to self-refer to his G.P. and met with workers from MIND to seek support for his mental health needs. He then chose to begin medication and completed a self referral to the Complex Needs Team for a Personality Disorder assessment. It is the belief of the worker and the male carer that without him having accessing the workshops, professionals would not have been able to offer him this mental health support. His engagement with the Dads worker following the workshops led to useful joint work with TAC & MASH professionals in order to manage the needs of his partner and child and his ongoing mental wellbeing.

Case Study 4: 'BME male carer seeking to manage an ongoing separation'.

The male carer had previously engaged at the centre's stay and play sessions, attended a dads parenting course and had TAC support from another setting. He felt he needed additional support to manage a crisis point whilst separating from his partner. At the workshops he became more self aware of his anger style, how his behaviours impacted on his children, how he could communicate more effectively, use Time Out and think about his wellbeing. On completing the workshops he continued with an Outcome Star and used SMART aims to look for independent housing and live separately from his partner and children. He has been observed having positive interactions with his children at stay and plays and a residential camp out. It is the belief of the worker and the male carer that the workshops and one to one work has provided a safety factor for the children during a time of separation and avoided higher level interventions by services.

Case Study 5: 'Separated male carer with mental health needs seeking access to his children.'

The male carer had not previously engaged at the centre. Prior to attending the workshops he appeared de-motivated and frustrated at his role as a male carer. He was motivated to attend the workshops so that he could gain skills in how to reduce conflict with his ex-partner. Due to his long term mental health needs he struggled with group work so chose to continue to access materials with the Dads worker outside of the group. He subsequently accessed mediation support through the Family Matters Resolution service at arranged sessions at the centre. He was signposted and accessed free legal advice from Families Need Fathers whilst in the family court process and benefited from concessions with his ex-partner to gain greater access to his children. He accessed support and volunteered for Aspire as part of his SMART aim to return to work. He has now gained full-time employment, continues to access mental health support and has increased contact time with his children. It is the belief of the worker and male carer that his initial attendance of the workshops was the motivating factor in him deciding to engage with services, make positive changes and maintain them in the community.

Practitioner learning: What worked?

- The workshops acted as a 'gateway' for 8 male carers to develop their self awareness and work on their behaviours that they otherwise would not have had access to. The men were responsible for the co-parenting of 12 children between the ages of 6 months and 8 years.
- The workshops were co-delivered by an experienced facilitator in therapeutic approaches and an experienced Dads worker. Having experienced facilitators ensured that the men's feelings were validated and avoided collusion of blaming tactics of ex-partners. It also enabled the men to SMART plan their next steps for themselves and their families.
- The workshops appealed to male carers because they offered 'practical life tools' and exercises that they could implement. This included doing role play, learning listening skills, practising their time out, trying out calming yoga exercises, learning de-stress and wellbeing techniques and having weekly handouts and worksheets.
- The workshops were delivered in a father inclusive manner so that male carers could access them. Men appreciated that it was a closed group for male carers only, accessible in the evening and delivered by joint male and female facilitators experienced in working with men.
- The workshops were attended by a diverse group of male carers. Men ranged in ethnicity, spoken languages and cultural values. They came from different socio-economic groups.

- Some had learning needs, others were well educated. These men may not have normally come into contact with each other outside of the group but benefited from peer to peer support by learning to trust each other within the group dynamic.
- The workshops provided a safety factor for the 12 children of the male carers involved, as the men were either experiencing family separation, conflict with partners or required support to maintain their mental health wellbeing and respectful behaviours. The workshops led to joint work with safeguarding agencies and were a resilience factor for families wanting to avoid escalating into social care and onto Child Protection plans.
- The workshops benefited from having a Dads worker at the setting who could follow up on the gains made on the programme with additional one to one support work. This enabled outcomes to be tracked 6 months later and meant men continued to be signposted to specialist support in order to carry on making positive changes.
- The workshops used evidence based materials that could be evaluated. This case study was anonymised so it could be included in a report by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum for shared learning purposes for other professionals and services working with men.

What could have been done differently?

- The workshops acted as a 'starting point' for male carers to think about their family situations. When the 8 weeks of learning was completed the men still required further support by the Dads worker for them to action positive change.
- The workshops were set at 8 weeks. This was due to the capacity of the setting when running a pilot for the first time. Facilitators felt this could be extended to 12 weeks in future to enable the male carers more time to develop their learning and action their new skills.
- Due to a lack of services being made available for male carers in the county, the workshops were attended by a wide range of men seeking support. This led to some male carers requiring complex needs support not suitable for group work.

Male carer's comments on future workshops for men:

"I believe there is a need for more workshops like these for men."

"For me, it being a closed group for men is quite important."

"I think having sessions with both male and female facilitation works really well as they complement each other."

"The workshops are a starting point. If the course was longer it would help to put more of it into practice."

"It is good to have both a worker experienced in supporting fathers and a worker with expertise in therapeutic practice."

"An excellent pilot and very worth extending. I'd certainly advocate this pilot as a dads focussed wellbeing course."

"It depends on the female capacity rather than it being male only facilitation."

"The workshop was very useful and informative. More time to cover conflict resolution would be good."

Future-proofing this work with men:

- ◆ Is there a demand by vulnerable male carers to access these workshops again?
- ◆ Would funding come from the local authority or be community led?
- ◆ Does this work meet the common agenda of safeguarding children?
- ◆ Can these workshops help families avoid moving onto a Child Protection plan?
- ◆ Can these workshops save the local authority money?

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Combine group work with 1:1 support. Signpost men to specialist services and joint work with other statutory agencies.'

As the co-facilitator and Dads worker at the centre I felt it was important the male carers got the support they needed to build on the learning from the workshops. I believe that complimenting group work with 1:1 support helps carers to continue to invest in the changes they want to make. Professionals need to be able to support fathers as a valuable resource to their families but also be confident in signposting men with more complex needs to specialist support. If these approaches are combined over time it can lead to significant changes for all types of men. By working more closely with health and social care, support workers can ensure men's risk factors are managed and reduced and fathers can continue to play a positive role in their children's lives.

Martin Andrews, OCC Dads worker, Grandpont CC.

"Having previously come into contact with vulnerable male carers through my work within the Family Group Conferencing Service, men have expressed to me their desires to improve their relationships with their partners and children. However, they have found it extremely difficult not only to access services but to find programmes that were tailored towards men's needs. I perceived a gap in services around vulnerable men. We looked at what evidence based resources were currently available and shaped them to work with this client group to address this gap.

The taught element of the programme was very useful in offering the men life skills and different ways of thinking and managing difficult emotions. I was particularly encouraged by the ways in which the men developed a sense of safety and trust within the group dynamic. The men felt able to talk openly about their feelings, frustrations and the ways in which they would like to work on their own self awareness and development, for the benefit of their relationships and children and trusted us to share this information anonymously. I would like to see a service like this offered to men on an ongoing basis."

Jackie Nevin, 'Journey for Dads' Workshops Facilitator

DISCO DADZ



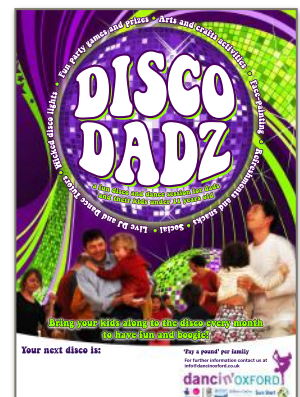
Rachel Gildea and the Dancin' Oxford Team have developed an inspiring way to bring fathers closer to their children. 'Disco Dadz' events are aimed at engaging male carers and single-parent fathers who want to bond with their children. The team of DJs, dance instructors and play workers have used Big Lottery funding to get the dance floor moving with dads and their kids in Oxfordshire.

Key findings

- ◆ The project is funded by a Big Lottery award.
- ◆ Rachel Gildea researched, designed and fundraised the project. She was supported by Euton Daley and Claire Thompson, founder of Dancin' Oxford.
- ◆ The project is co-run by an enthusiastic team of workers experienced in outreaching target groups. Euton Daley DJs and Roly Carline leads physical play.
- ◆ Children's Centres which work with targeted dads signpost them to events.
- ◆ The Pegasus Theatre provides tickets for children's shows & Baby Boogie sessions to encourage dads to attend.
- ◆ The events increase positive interactions between male carers and their children.

Let the music play

Disco Dadz, an energising new event for fathers and their children, has grown out of the hugely successful *Baby Boogie* programme, part of Dancin' Oxford at Pegasus Theatre over the last three years. This scheme has been funded by Awards For All from the Big Lottery Fund and runs for a year. It will engage directly with two of Oxford's deprived communities, working with lone-parent families, specifically single-parent fathers, who have seldom taken part in community arts activities. The music events are for all types of dads and male carers and their kids, 11 years and under. The monthly disco and dance sessions include live DJing by Euton Daley and disco lights. Roly Carline leads the dance tutoring and party games. There is face-painting, prizes and refreshments together with social time for fathers to meet up and spend quality time with their children. There is no need to book and sessions last for 2 hours. Concession prices are kept low at £1 per family. A bonus for each participating family is a subsidised family ticket to see a Dancin' Oxford show at Pegasus with free bus travel to the venue, at least once during the year. The project also offers up to four apprentice roles to young men under 18 in Barton and Blackbird Leys who are interested in gaining valuable professional experience in the arts.



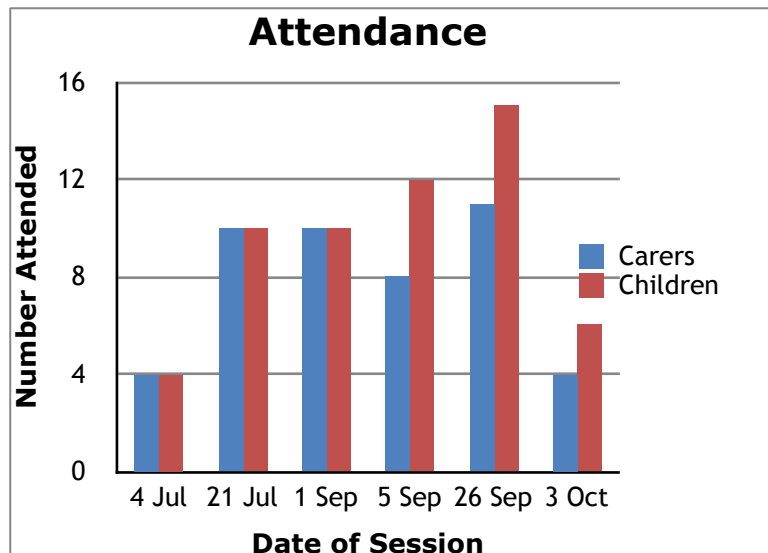
Next steps for Oxfordshire

- It can take time for male carers to engage with and attend father friendly projects. In order to become established it is important this work has time and resources to build.
- To successfully deliver dads events in targeted communities, organisers need the support of professionals working with men to 'buy into' the project and signpost dads. More settings working with targeted men in other areas of the county may need to signpost men to future Disco Dadz events.
- A balance needs to be struck between making father-inclusive events a gateway for all male carers to attend while still targeting vulnerable fathers. It should be noted that all male carers are a target group as they are often not included in mainstream family services.
- Separated male carers with risky behaviours may have specific court ordered times and venues to have contact with their children so may be unable to attend. Separated fathers on Child Protection plans are also likely to face barriers to attending from social care and ex-partners if they are unsupervised.
- Next steps would be to deliver a case study of the completed project to stakeholders working with men. This may develop a common agenda around increasing 'community led models' to meet fathers' needs during local authority austerity cuts.

Blacbird Leys & Barton sessions

The Leys Children's Centre in Blackbird Leys and Barton Neighbourhood Centre are already hosting the programme. Settings with support workers who work alongside fathers in this locality are able to signpost men to the monthly sessions. Activities are then tailored to each centre and event.

Attendance at Leys & Barton, July 2015 to Oct 2015:



Sue Holden from Barton Neighbourhood Centre:

"There is a strong feeling within these communities that there is a great need for this type of activity to encourage 'missing' parents to become involved with their children."

"For many young children estranged from their dads this is an opportunity to spend quality time together on a regular basis."



Claire Thompson,
Arts Development and Founder of Dancin' Oxford, one of the UK's biggest dance festivals:

"It is hoped that an additional benefit will be an increased awareness of other dance opportunities with Dancin' Oxford and other organisations."



Images from Disco Dadz events:



Disco Dadz feedback from male carers & children:

"I would definitely recommend Disco Dadz to other dads, after all it is not often you get the chance jump about with your children with pumped up music in a controlled and relaxed environment."
Male carer

"This is the best day ever!" Brandon, 9 years old

"The workshop was well organised, and was a good introduction to help everyone loosen up. The exercises encouraged children to discover and experiment with dance moves."
Male carer

"The atmosphere was proper disco-like!"
Male carer

"My daughter and son and me enjoyed it very much with all the program sessions: dancing, music, prizes, drinks, lights, etc. Thanks to all the organisers."
Male carer

"I enjoyed having fun with my dad"
Imogen, 8 years old

"I've really enjoyed Disco Dadz. My son has really enjoyed it, he likes the lights and music. It's good to do something we wouldn't normally get to do at home. It's good to get the exercise!"
Male carer

Theatre show feedback from male carers & children:

Free tickets were given to Disco Dadz male carers and their children for the physical dance show 'Grass', by Second Hand Dance at the Pegasus Theatre.

"Refreshing for us too as adults. Learnt things we'd forgotten about the ecology of life."

"More Shows please!"

"Nice to have some special time with my daughter."

"They all loved it and felt it was really, really good."

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Combine community based outreach work with statutory services to reach more targeted dads.'

With the launch of a new service model of Children and Family Centres in 2017 it may be beneficial for fathers work to continue in other capacities and models to meet the full needs of all fathers. As OCC's resources need to be targeted at the most vulnerable it is unlikely the new service model will be able to meet the need of all fathers wanting open access play and learning activities with their children. Statutory services may have to begin to signpost vulnerable men to community led spaces such as Community Centres, run by charity funded projects. If future pilot projects like 'Disco Dadz' are to succeed in engaging targeted men it will be important that community led outreach work and statutory services think of ways to work together. This will help services develop a common agenda of reaching targeted dads and improving outcomes for children at a time of local authority cuts.

How is it father-inclusive?

- The project is specifically aimed at engaging male carers and their children.
- Big Lottery funding ensures a community-led project can engage fathers at a time when budgets are being cut by the local authority, which impacts on its capacity to work with men.
- The events are delivered in a father friendly manner and environment. Events are organised at weekend times when working fathers can attend, events are offered for the sole use of fathers and fathers have access to male workers at the sessions.
- The events are organised around fun games, interactive music and dance activities that appeal to children and fathers who enjoy physical play.
- Organisers work with Dads workers at Children's Centres in order to signpost fathers.
- Dads have provided positive feedback that the sessions are an enjoyable way to bond with their children in a male friendly environment which helps them to spend quality time together.
- Events delivered in the community appeal to men wanting to interact with their children in a way they may not get from attending early years settings. Some settings remain predominantly based around serving the needs of mothers, have an overly feminised environment or view men as a risk.
- Father friendly projects like Disco Dadz meets the needs of fathers seeking to positively interact with their children at a time when dads in the county may no longer be able to access their previous local/rural based Children's Centre following proposed local authority budget cuts and the introduction of a new service model of family settings in 2017.



RACHEL GILDEA - DISCO DADZ PROJECT MANAGER:

"If you have a body and a pulse, you can find a way to dance. That's our big ethos at Dancin' Oxford; that dance should be and can be for everyone. I have a great job: I get to dream up projects and, funding permitting, make them happen. My role is to create outreach projects which bring dance and the arts to those who might not necessarily have as much access to them or those who don't think it's for them."

"Last year I had an idea for a project to get dads dancing with their kids. I set about writing my first funding bid to secure money for it, in partnership with Barton Community Association, and, in the process, began to face my fear of budgets, spreadsheets and numbers. Against the odds, we received the money from Awards For All and National Lottery England."

"We are particularly interested in making time and space for male carers and their children. Our emphasis on this father-child bond is in celebration of what we believe to be a changing landscape in childcare, one in which the care is increasingly shared between parents and carers. I had been in conversation with family centres in Oxford, who the dance festival work with, and they had told me about their desire to get more dads through their doors."

"I was keen to develop the hugely successful Baby Boogie programme at Pegasus Theatre. For personal reason as a dancer I have always wanted my dad to take more of an interest in what I do. So here was the perfect project."

"This spring saw the launch of the project, dubbed 'Disco Dadz'. It's a fun disco and dance session for dads and their children where playrooms are transformed into nightclubs and disco lights and pop music fill the air. Children and adults transform too: getting into costume, having their face painted and becoming clowns, tigers, snow queens and spider men. We also have party games, dance battles, prizes, refreshments, and time where dads and their children can get to hit the dance floor and 'style it out'."

"I'm under no illusions that dads can be a tough crowd. There's much work to be done in finding them, getting them to come along, and only then to get them on the dancefloor! Having said that, we think perhaps there is something less threatening about a disco setting."

"The project has two other parts to it: a training opportunity for two local young men under 18 to become apprentices and work with the dance tutor and DJ. If you're under 18 and interested in a career in dance or DJ-ing this would be great work experience. There is also the opportunity to complete the Arts Award which is recognised as half a GCSE qualification."

"Disco Dadz is a disco with a difference and there are two rules: Everyone is welcome. Everyone can dance."

Visit: dancinoxford.co.uk for details

info contact: rgildea@oxford.gov.uk

SOVEREIGN COMMUNITY INVESTMENT



Justin Andrewes is the Community Investment Team Co-ordinator in Oxfordshire for Sovereign Housing Association. He explains how he supports initiatives affecting communities in neighbourhoods where

Sovereign own housing stock. This includes funding project work with fathers and supporting South Abingdon Children's Centre to deliver services for dads.

Key findings

- ◆ Sovereign supports many low paid families with their housing needs across Oxfordshire.
- ◆ Community investment work encourages families to take ownership of their community and increases their life choices.
- ◆ A series of funded joint projects with South Abingdon Children's Centre is providing valuable services and support for local fathers & their families.
- ◆ Community led, upstream, early intervention models have the opportunity to meet the needs of vulnerable male carers that statutory services can no longer provide.
- ◆ Statutory services need to show greater willingness to work with community-led organisations to achieve common agendas with men.

Background

Sovereign is one of the largest Housing Associations in the country, providing over 38,000 homes in the south and south west. It currently owns around 8,000 homes in Oxfordshire. Sovereign surveyed their tenants and found that typically a household is made up of a working couple with two children, managing on a low income. Sovereign found that social housing residents don't lack aspirations, but often have low expectations. Sovereign prides itself on being able to combine a social ethos with a forward thinking commercial approach by 'creating homes, shaping communities and changing lives'.

Community Investment

Justin Andrewes is the coordinator for Sovereign's Community Investment Team in Oxfordshire. He works collaboratively with community partners in neighbourhoods of focus, identified as needing support, where Sovereign



own property. Sovereign invest time, money and resources to deliver initiatives that support residents and groups to develop skills, improve confidence and build resilience. There is a connection between low education, financial sustainability, self-esteem and housing needs. This can lead to neighbourhood management issues such as managing anti-social behaviour, debt and the



Next steps for Oxfordshire

- Once funding for fathers work has been implemented, community-led projects need to make this work sustainable by implementing 'upstream' strategies and committing to longer term goals.
- Community-led projects that work with fathers may need to use charity fund matching streams such as the Big Lottery Fund to keep developing.
- For a community-led project to remain committed to delivering fathers work it needs to have a Dads Champion at all levels of its organisation. This can be difficult if an organisation has multiple agendas competing for limited resources.
- Mentors may need to be found within the community that have benefited from previous support. They can then take a strategic lead for the next wave of fathers work.
- Local authority statutory services, such as social care and health services may need encouragement to reach out to community led agencies. A common agenda needs to be built so these services buy into the benefits to their organisations by working with community-led projects that are already successfully reaching men.

turn over of housing stock. Sovereign has committed itself to 'upstream' work to ensure early intervention can have a positive impact on communities and resident's lives. This work involves looking at specific target groups in communities and includes working with targeted male carers and fathers.

"We take a holistic approach enabling partners to work with all members of a community, not just our residents, encouraging social cohesion and building neighbourhoods of aspiration and hope."

Justin Andrewes, Community Investment Coordinator

Sovereign has provided funding and practitioner support for 3 separate fathers' work projects in Oxfordshire in 2015:

- Father's Day Fun Day
- Dads camp out at Hill End Outdoor Centre
- Man Enough Parenting Programme

'Father's Day Fun Day' at South Abingdon Children's Centre

A fun day for fathers and their children was organised as part of the national Father's Day celebrations. This took place on Saturday 20 June 2015 in Caldecott meadow next to South Abingdon Children's Centre. The centre already works closely with male carers housed in this area. The centre joint worked with North Abingdon and Grandpont Children's Centres to signpost fathers from their locality. Funding for the activities was provided by Oxfordshire Parenting Forum and this was match funded by Sovereign. The activities included an African drumming workshop, den-making and cardboard-city building, forest school area with fire-pit and cooking, kids weaving workshop, PEEPLE group for dads with babies, art & crafts, free BookStart reading packs for dads and kids and a Bubble man fun water play activity.



Den-making



kids eco-weaving



African drumming



PEEPLE Dad & baby group

free book resources



Fire pit cooking

Bubble man



Note - Images are reproduced with the kind permission of the male carers.

Note - Participants that completed South Abingdon Children's Centre's satisfaction survey gave their consent for data to be used.

Satisfaction Survey

Benefits of special dads event?	89% - Relaxed atmosphere 67% - more activities
What services would you like to see at CCs for Dads?	67% - childcare advice 67% - health care advice 50% - benefits advice
Personal benefits of Dad's Day event?	67% - having fun with my children 56% - trying new activities 44% - meeting other dads
More likely to attend Saturday sessions after coming today?	89%

Attendance

32 people attended the event. This included new families who had not attended the Children's Centre before. Fathers who attended included young dads, dads receiving funded 2 year old childcare places, unemployed dads, dads living in the local super output area of deprivation and dads with English as a separate language. Children who attended included babies, under 5 and over 5 year olds.

Centre workers felt it was important to acknowledge and celebrate fathers day locally by organising fun activities for dads and their children. Staff gave feedback that they appreciated workers from two other Children's Centres helping with the organisation of the event. This was seen as a useful attempt to 'cluster' services for fathers together at a time of Children's Centre Saturdads sessions being under threat of closure. The event was attended by 32 people. This was lower than expected and may well have been due to the poor weather on the day. Some dads, especially those with babies, preferred to engage with the indoor activities. The outdoor activities such as the firepit, drumming and Bubble man remained popular. All the dads took free books for Father's Story week with a link to the website. Most dads filled in an evaluation form. Dads provided positive feedback that they had enjoyed the event, it had been well organised and they would be more likely to attend Saturdads sessions in future.

Next Steps

- *Promotional publicity* - information went out to preschools and foundation stage settings. Future events could be promoted further via social media, local radio, newspapers and settings in which men congregate, such as Sports Centres, Community Centres and Church groups.
- *Future delivery with OPA* - The Children's Centres that delivered this event may no longer exist if local authority cuts come into effect in 2016. Events for fathers would need to be organised by charity and community organisations. Oxfordshire Play Association, which is co-ordinating a play event in South Abingdon in 2016, is considering how to specifically target fathers to engage them in their children's play and education.
- *Joint work with OPF & Dad's Workers* - OPF Fathers' Champions Network and Dads workers are keen to work again with Sovereign on delivering events for fathers in the county.

'Dads camp out' at HillEnd Outdoor Centre

Sovereign co-funded the organisation of a camp out for fathers and their children at Hill End Outdoor Centre in Oxfordshire, between 21-22 August 2015. This was delivered by staff from South Abingdon Children's Centre. Fathers who attended the centre's Saturdads stay and play group were signposted to the event. Some additional fathers were signposted from Grandpont Children's Centre's Saturdads group.

Dads arrived on the Friday afternoon to set up camp with their children. Most of the fathers had not been camping before with their children. Staff were around to help if needed, but they encouraged the dads to put up their tents themselves with their children's help. As evening arrived, staff and the dads joined together to make an evening meal of veggie pasta, salad and fresh fruit and yogurts for dessert. Dads and children decided to all eat together in the canteen hut and started to chat and bond as a group.

As night fell the children became excited about lighting the fire pit outside and getting to cook marshmallows on willow sticks and having hot chocolate before bed time. Staff observed dads relaxing with their children, giving them lots of positive attention and enjoying the freedom of being outdoors together.

In the morning, staff and dads joined in to make a cooked breakfast and discussed their plans for exploring the Hill End site. Staff felt confident leaving the dads and their children to explore the many nature trails and eco-facilities by themselves. A group of dads and children completed a circular woodland walk. They stopped off at the forest school site and then tried pond dipping with sticks the children had found on the way.

Some dads and children explored the outdoor music garden and jammed out beats and notes on the wooden instruments. Families returned to the fire pit for a final catch up to talk about all the exciting adventures they had had during their stay, before packing up their tents in the afternoon to leave.

Dad Attendance

In total, 22 people attended the camp out. This included 8 male carers, 11 children and 3 partners.

Dad Survey

Dads completed satisfaction surveys.

All the replies stated they enjoyed the event, they would like to go camping again and they would now consider doing more outdoor activities with their children. When asked whether they felt more confident about camping after the event, dads all listed at least 2 point increases on a 0-5 scale.

Note - Participants that completed South Abingdon Children's Centre survey gave their consent for images, data and feedback to be included in this report.



Saturdads go Camping!

It was great to see so many of you (and to meet families from other centres). We are hoping it can become an annual event so would like you to give us some feedback please!

Have you been camping with your children before?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Did you/your children enjoy the event?

☒ ☐ ☐

Tell us one thing that your family particularly enjoyed:

Enjoyed the tent and sleeping under the tent.

The camping was fabulous.

Is there anything you think needed to be done differently?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Would you like to go again?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Has it made you think you might do other outdoor activities with your children?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If so, what other activities would you like to do? **E.g. walk in the forest/old forest where it rains.**

How confident did you feel about camping before the event? (1 not at all, 5 very)

1 2 3 4 5

How confident do you feel now? (1 not at all, 5 very)

☒

Dad Feedback

"We particularly enjoyed playing in the mud and the camp fire! It has made me think about doing Forest School with my children in the future."

Male carer of 3 children under 5

"I enjoyed having lots of quality time with my daughter. It was well organised. I am more confident putting up the tent with my daughter now we have done it together ourselves."

Male carer, 1 child over 5

"Enjoyed the fire and sleeping under the tent. The camping was fabulous."

Separated male carer, 1 child under 5 and 1 child over 5

"I think more events should be organised like this just for dads as the dads really seemed to enjoy it and bond with their children."

Male carer, 1 child over 5

Man Enough Parenting Programme

Man Enough is a 7 week course based on the Family Caring Trust's parenting programme. It covers: ignoring misbehaviour, training and encouraging responsibility, effective listening, empathy and communication, respectful discipline and quality time. The programme has been delivered in Oxfordshire for over 15 years. It is tailored for all types of male carers, including foster fathers or those not living with their children. The programme is father-inclusive by being delivered in the evening to an all male group of carers by all male facilitators. Mark Ginsburg facilitates the programme. He is an experienced Dads worker, Fathers Champion and social worker and is currently based at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxfordshire. He also has experience of working with teenagers and children with disabilities so can offer most carers an insight into parenting skills.



Financial support from Sovereign

Sovereign's Community Investment Team co-funding the delivery of the Man Enough parenting programme at South Abingdon Children's Centre in October 2015. It was significant that a Housing Association was prepared to invest in parenting support for fathers at a time of budget cuts by the local authority. Community investment may offer a potential solution to the current lack of funding for fathers' work by OCC. Fathers and male carers were referred from the local area, social care and Children's Centres. The programme was attended by 10 male carers. *For outcomes, see separate case study on Man Enough parenting programme.*

Next steps for Sovereign's Community Investment in fathers

- The joint work with Sovereign and South Abingdon Children's Centre has helped to widen the profile of the centre in the community with youth groups. This could provide an opportunity for more joint work with young men and fathers based around NEET work in order to improve their aspirations and employment chances.
- Sovereign have worked with practitioners in other areas of the South to embed dad's stay and play sessions in deprived communities. The potential closure of Children's Centres and Saturdads sessions for dads in Oxfordshire could lead to Sovereign supporting partners to embed similar stay and plays in Oxfordshire communities.

- Sovereign have identified a need to improve the educational attainment of 11-16 years olds at schools in South Abingdon. This could mean working with young men before they become young fathers in order to put in place resilience factors for later life.
- Sovereign are aware that some of the changes government are making may impact on social housing. One change could mean families earning an income of 30k will have to pay full market rent. In Oxfordshire this could be the difference between paying £1300 rather than £800 per month. Working with fathers to improve their employment chances and increase their wages could offset these future costs to families.

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Community led work needs to develop partnerships and common agendas with practitioners specialising in working with men and statutory services.'

"Key to effective management of tenancies and communities is understanding the needs of fathers as fathers. While Sovereign approach their community work holistically, it is important to recognise that ensuring fathers are equipped with the core skills they need to be positive role models for not just their children, but also those within their community, is key to building strong, confident and resilient communities. Moreover, from a housing perspective it is essential that frontline workers know where to seek guidance when issues arise which are outside of their skill-set. With the right interventions many housing management issues could be avoided, in particular when fathers are estranged from their children, which can cause tensions and put tenancies at risk. In the current financial climate it is paramount that agencies and organisations create strong partnerships and a network of father's work practitioners will need to be maintained to ensure specialist knowledge is available to all who need it."

Justin Andrewes, Sovereign.

How is this father-inclusive?

- Sovereign's ethos involves delivering early intervention with targeted fathers that live in communities where they own housing stock.
- Sovereign's Community Investment Team provides funding to support father's work in Oxfordshire.
- This funding enables partnership work to develop with local Children's Centres and supports practitioners specialising in working with fathers.
- This work ensures that a parenting skills programme for fathers is delivered that would not have been made available by the local authority.
- This work led to three Children's Centres delivering a joint Dad's Fun day to celebrate Father's Day.
- This work led to a camp out event for fathers and their children that helped targeted and separated dads to spend quality time with their kids and build their confidence.
- This community led model can meet a service gap for men. It provides important funding streams and ensures specialist services for fathers continue at a time when services are being reduced by the local authority.

"We will provide the long-term stability for residents to live successful, independent lives. To do this we will seek new partnership models with our stakeholders, particularly local government, to reflect the changing world. Ultimately we all have the same goal to create affordable and thriving communities, and we are committed to achieving this together."

Ann Santry CBE, Chief Executive Officer



MAKING CHANGES



Liz Jones is the case manager of Making Changes. She explains how the community based programme challenges, supports & encourages perpetrators of domestic abuse to engage in respectful relationships.

Key findings

- ◆ **Making Changes is the only community based DVPP program available for abusive men in Oxfordshire.**
- ◆ **The programme uses Duluth materials and is undergoing RESPECT accreditation.**
- ◆ **It has delivered weekly programmes in Oxford, Abingdon & Didcot for several years.**
- ◆ **NICE's 2016 guidelines say local authorities need to commission perpetrator programmes to safeguard children.**
- ◆ **The programme works mainly with men who are fathers.**
- ◆ **OCC social workers regularly refer dads to safeguard children on Child Protection plans.**
- ◆ **Making Changes requires £60,000 annual running costs. OCC have not yet financially contributed.**
- ◆ **Referrals have now stopped while funding is found. This is a safeguarding issue.**

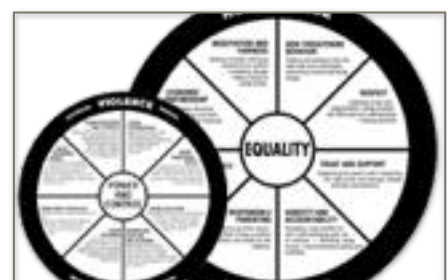
Background

'Making Changes' is a voluntary community programme for men who perpetrate violence and abuse towards women. It is a registered charity. This initiative began in West Berkshire and for the past 8 years has been delivering a Duluth based programme of group work sessions. It has delivered programmes for men in Newbury, Oxford and Abingdon. It currently delivers two weekly evening sessions at venues in Oxford and Didcot. The programme is designed to reduce the number of men perpetrating domestic abuse. A man who has completed the programme should understand the true nature of his controlling and abusive behaviour and learn appropriate ways to manage his emotions, no longer being a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

Programme content

The programme used by Making Changes, '*Creating a Process of Change for Men who Batter*', is based on the Duluth power and control model. It takes 27 weeks to complete. The programme consists of 9 modules, each theme lasts 3 weeks, including DVD vignettes & role play.

- 1. Non-violence**
- 2. Non-threatening behaviour**
- 3. Respect**
- 4. Support and Trust**
- 5. Honesty and Accountability**
- 6. Sexual Respect**
- 7. Partnership (shared responsibility)**
- 8. Negotiation & Fairness**
- 9. Parenting**



Men's Motivations

- ◆ To improve their relationship.
- ◆ To resume or continue having contact with their children.
- ◆ To have their child removed from a Child Protection Plan.
- ◆ To stop the cycle of failed relationships.

Men's feedback 2015

"Very informative and I got a lot of knowledge. It increased my awareness of how to improve myself. There were lots of things I've learnt. Now that I'm spending time with my children, I'm using the knowledge. I appreciate the time the workers have spent with me."
Male carer

"It was a very good session as usual. I see things in a different perspective now. I believe I am a better person for my family. It's hard. It does get better."
Male carer

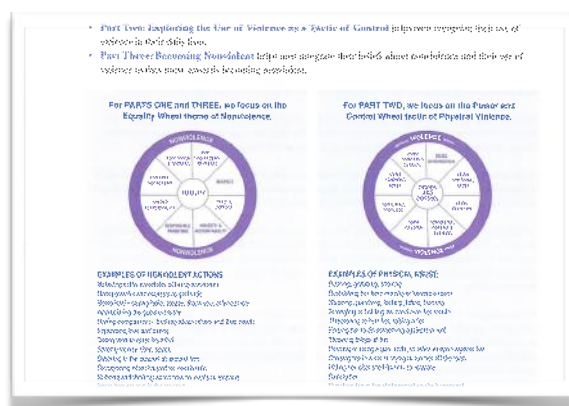
"If I knew now what I've learnt on the programme in my previous relationships I wouldn't have been so abusive. I hope other men can get the chance to go on the programme."
Male carer

Aims of the program

- To reduce the incidence of repeat domestic abuse.
- To reduce the number of men (aged 18 and over) perpetrating domestic abuse.
- To encourage men and support them in addressing their attitudes and beliefs which underpin their abusive behaviour.
- To challenge, reduce the severity of and prevent further abuse and hold perpetrators accountable for their abuse.
- To increase the physical and mental well-being of female partners affected by domestic abuse by ensuring they have access and support from specialist services, during and after the programme. The safeguarding of children is paramount and referrals to services should be made where appropriate.

Impact of the programme

- Enables each participant to understand how his abuse stems from beliefs of entitlement which support his control of his partner's actions, thoughts and feelings.
- Increases the participant's understanding of the causes of his violence by examining the cultural and social contexts in which he uses violence against his partner.
- Increases the participant's willingness to change his actions by examining the negative effects of his behaviour on his relationship, his partner, his children, his family and himself.
- Encourages the participant to become accountable to those he has hurt through his use of violence by helping him to acknowledge his abuse, accept responsibility for its impact on his partner and others, and take specific steps to change.
- Increases the participant's understanding and willingness to change by exploring actions, intents and beliefs that support equality with a woman.
- Provides the opportunity for a man to find love, trust and commitment in relationships with women and children by learning new ways of acting in a relationship.



Facilitation, delivery & supervision

Making Changes facilitators who deliver the programme have all been trained using the Duluth accredited training package. They come from a variety of backgrounds including Domestic & Sexual Abuse Coordinator, social workers, drug & alcohol workers, therapists, Dads support workers and YOS workers.

The programme has two facilitators per session; best practice indicating that one male and one female facilitator is the most effective combination. Each facilitator has a programme manual and each programme has DVDs which include vignettes and victim feedback. Each session has an observer who quality assures the facilitators and keeps observer notes.

Some sessions are filmed in order to provide evidence for RESPECT accreditation. There is a quarterly facilitator meeting which includes in-house training. Commissioners are provided with monthly and quarterly data reports. Participants provide informal feedback when they have completed the programme.

Referrals, Assessments & Safeguarding

Self referrals are accepted from any male who resides in Oxfordshire and Berkshire who is 18 years or older. The abusive behaviour must be from the male towards a female partner, or recent ex-partner. Attempts are always made to ensure participants can access the group, regardless of their language or physical disability. Making Changes also accommodates men on a one to one basis, should they not be suited to group work.

Before commencing the programme the participant must successfully complete two assessment sessions in preparation. These sessions aim to establish that the participant is motivated to change (therefore taking responsibility for their behaviour), has admitted a pattern of violence or controlling behaviour and will abide by the group rules and participation contract.

There is a £50 cost for this service to cover administration and experience shows that the men who pay a fee are more motivated to attend. The fee is non payable if in receipt of benefits. The programme is free for those living in Oxfordshire or West Berkshire.

During programme delivery, the female partners are supported by Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service, all of whom are trained domestic abuse outreach workers. The female partners are asked, confidentially, to comment on the participants' use of violence and controlling behaviour. Partners can simultaneously attend the FREEDOM programme for female survivors of abuse.

"When I first came to the group I knew I had to change. For the first few weeks I wasn't here for myself, I was here to prove a point to my partner. I missed a few weeks. Only when I realised I should change for myself that's when I came back to the group."
Male carer

"When watching the DVD's, at first I would have blamed the women, but now the only behaviour I'm thinking about is my own. Just because someone behaves badly to me doesn't give me the right to behave badly myself. I just want to be a positive role model to my daughter and it is a motivation to do the right thing."
Male carer

"Personally, I didn't want to buy into this course at first, as things were still bad at home. But now I have a better understanding of myself, my childhood, I feel more in control of my instinctive behaviours. It hasn't gone away what I feel in stressful situations, but what has changed is I don't act on those things as much." Male carer

Do Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes work?

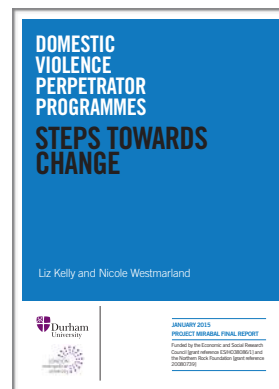
The Mirabal report was published in January 2015. This is the most recent study to examine the effectiveness of DVPPs to change the abusive behaviours of men. It states:

"As we complete this study there is more conversation about what is to be done with perpetrators of domestic violence than for some time – a conversation which ricochets across police, social services, women's support services, multi-agency groups, policymakers, commissioners, media commentators and academics. At issue are two key questions:

- Do domestic violence perpetrator programmes (DVPPs) actually work in reducing men's violence and abuse and increasing the freedom of women and children?*
- How do we hold more perpetrators to account, since even if DVPPs do work, their limited capacity means the majority of men do not access them and criminal justice interventions alone are clearly not creating the change that all stakeholders seek?*

"After spending time with thousands of pages of transcripts of men and women talking about their use/experiences of violence and abuse we are convinced that our data shows steps towards change do start to happen for most. Some men make only a few, halting steps forward. A tiny minority take steps backwards. Others start taking small steps and end up taking huge leaps. For many men, women and children, their lives are improved following a domestic violence perpetrator programme."

"For now, we conclude that whilst there is more work to be done, and improvements to be made to group work with men, support for women and children, and the location of DVPPs within CCRs, overall we are optimistic about their ability to play an important part in the quest to end domestic violence."



Report of Making Changes programme from August 2013 - July 2014

Note - These figures were produced independently by Making Changes and consent given for their publication. Data is published in table format in line with guidance from the Office of National Statistics to avoid identification.

Demographics

Number of referrals	51
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8 men were already on the Oxford programme on 1 August 2013 & 43 referrals in the reporting period.

Type of referral	Social Care	Self	Respect	GP	Solicitor	Other (please state)	Unknown
Number of men	21	5	17	5	1	7	2
Other: A2Dominion – 1; Children Centre – 3; County Court – 1; Probation – 1; Relate – 1							

Area clients live	Oxford	West Oxon	South & Vale	Cherwell	Other (please state)	Unknown
Number of men	19	8	12	6	5	1
Other: Andover – 1; Reading – 1; Swindon – 1; London – 1; Newbury – 1						

Age of client	18 - 21	22 - 30	30 - 45	46 - 60	61+	Unknown
Number of men	1	8	21	14	0	7

Special needs	Learning disabled	Physically disabled	Semi /illiterate	English is second language	Other (please state)	Unknown
Number of men	1	1	3	7	3	7
Other: Dyslexia – 3						

Ethnicity	White British	Mixed heritage	Black British	South Asian British	Other (please state)	Unknown
Number of men	36	1	1	3	4	6
Other: Hungarian – 1; Polish – 1; German – 1; South American - 1						

Employment	Unemployed	Self-employed	Employed	Retired	Unknown
Number of men	16	5	22	0	8

Substance Misuse	Alcohol Only	Drugs Only	Alcohol & Drugs	Unknown
Number of men	10	7	3	10
There are 20 men who have misused drugs and/or alcohol recently. Cannabis is the most commonly used drug. Only 1 man said he was getting support to stop his drug and alcohol habit. 6 men said they were getting support for alcohol dependency from Lifeline/Harm Min Service/ Oasis and sheltered accommodation. There were reports of historic drug taking including cocaine, crack and steroids.				

Mental Health Problems	Yes	No	Unknown
Number of men	17	23	11
17 men reported recent mental health problems. These ranged from depression, clinical depression, anxiety, self-harm and 2 men had attempted suicide in the past. Most were on medication and 2 have been receiving therapy. 6 men suffering from mental health illness were also misusing either drugs or alcohol.			

Convictions	Police called but no further action	Police Caution	Criminal Conviction	Unknown
Number of men		1	12	7
12 men had convictions ranging from physical assault, driving offences, drug offences, theft, drunk & disorderly. 6 men had convictions for assault against their partners.				

Number of current partners	22
Of the other 29 cases. There are 7 where the state of the relationship is unknown. 3 cases where the domestic abuse is against ex-partners but the men are now living with other women. In 19 cases the relationship had broken up when the men were referred to the programme.	

Length of relationship	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21+ years	Unknown
Number	13	8	19	12	2	7

Number of children	77
Number of men with children	41

In 7 cases it is unknown whether they had children and 3 men had no children

Safety Indicators

Reports of violence whilst on the programme	No Reports	Reported
Number of men		3

1 man had 2 incidents an assault and harassment both were reported to the Police by the ex-partner. The incidents were discussed in group
 1 man reported in group and the incident was discussed.
 In both cases support was given to the partner through the specialist support agency.
 1 man having completed the programme returned to Making Changes following an incident where he slapped his partner and has asked to come back on. The partner has again been referred to the specialist support agency.

Contact with Partners	Contact not made	Contact but refused support	Referral to DV agency	Referral to MARAC
Number of partners	unknown	unknown	10	3
Number of ex-partners	unknown	unknown	0	0

Up to 1st October 2013 13 partners were contacted via telephone. 6 accepted support from a specialist support agency. 2 of the partners were in refuge so were not contacted as they were already being supported. 5 did not want support but were given the local number to contact if they changed their mind. There were 3 partners referred to specialist support from 1 July; 13 partners received a letter with the contact details of the local support services. 3 partners were referred to MARAC; all of these had partners who were on the programme when the reporting period started. There were no referrals to MARAC for information share on the partners of men referred in during the reporting period.

DASH Risk Level	Standard	Medium	High	Unknown
Number of partners	0	1	3	47
Number of ex-partners				3

Safeguarding	Child Protection Plan	Alerts raised by MC
Number of children	39	0
Number of adults	n/a	4

Alerts were raised by facilitators on group for 4 women; 1 because she was pregnant; 1 as the couple had decided to separate; 1 couple were moving in together; 1 man reported a physical incident whilst on group.

Quality Indicators

Number where no prior agency involvement	18
In 2 cases it is unknown if they had agency involvement prior to referring to the programme. The 18 men who had no agency involvement found details of Making Changes on the internet or through the local domestic abuse helpline.	

Number of men attending assessments	No Show	Attended
1st Assessment	5	43
2nd Assessment	5	38
There are no records of why men did not turn up to the assessments. 2 of the men who have completed the second assessment are waiting to start the programme.		

Number of clients starting the programme	30
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Reasons for not starting	Failed to start the programme	Not suited	Moved out of area	Offered 1-2-1	Other (please state)
Number of men	5			1	
There is no record of why 5 men attended 2 assessed as not suited to the programme because he did not speak English and required an interpreter. He was given 1-2-1 sessions but this was unsuccessful.					

Current men leaving the programme	Completed the programme	Left during programme
Number of men	17	4
4 men left the programme early. 1 left because he had a new job which meant he could not attend; 1 left because his new partner told him that he did not need to be on it; 2 left but there is no record of why.		

Formal exit interviews were not implemented, however men on the group have reported when leaving. The feedback has included:

"I could go back to being the old me, but I don't want to be the old me."

"I take more responsibility for my actions now"

"When I started the programme I was self-aware but not honest with myself"

"I have the time-out which I can use if I need to"

"I don't like that I have been abusive to S"

"I was the loud aggressor, but no more"

"Everything I didn't want to become, I did and I needed to change"

"Being honest with yourself, I used to justify my behaviour by blaming L"

Child Contact	Contact with children	Supervised contact	No contact	Unknown
Number of men	27 (51 children)	3 (9 children)	7 (17 children)	11 (6 children)
None of the men lost contact with their children whilst on the programme. Of the 3 men who had supervised contact; 2 did not attend the assessment; 1 was given unsupervised contact on completion of the programme. Of the 7 men who had no contact with their children, 5 completed the programme. 3 of those had children on child protection plans and they were working towards resuming contact. In the other 2 cases there was no hope of contact but wanted to be better fathers if they had more children in the future.				

Reflections on Oxfordshire data

- Knowing that only 2% of the men have convictions for domestic related offences is useful as it shows that many men do not come to the attention of the police.
- The last 2 years of data shows that 40% of men had some form of mental health needs. These included 64% with depression. Men reported OCD, BPD, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation, PTSD, paranoia and 2% reported suicide attempts.
- There was a high rate of fathers on the programme. A potential 51 children were being safeguarded by the men making changes to their abusive behaviours.

NICE guidelines to local authorities to safeguard children from abuse

NICE clinical 'guidelines' are recommendations about the treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions in the NHS in England and Wales. NICE updated its guidelines and pathway about domestic abuse in March 2016 and produced a quality standard for those working with families affected by domestic violence. This guidance includes - [Quality statement 4: Referral to specialist services for people perpetrating domestic violence or abuse:](#)



Quality statement - People who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse are offered referral to specialist services.

Rationale - People who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse should be able to access evidence-based specialist services. Health and social care practitioners should identify available local services and know how to access these. Providing support for perpetrators can reduce the incidence of domestic violence and abuse.

Structure - a) Evidence of local referral pathways to ensure that people who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse are referred to specialist services.

b) Evidence of local arrangements to ensure that specialist services are available to support people who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse.

Process - Proportion of people who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse who are referred to specialist services.

Numerator - The number in the denominator who are referred to specialist services. **Denominator** - The number of people who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse.

Outcome - Reduction in repeated domestic violence and abuse.

What the quality statement means for service providers - Health and social care practitioners, and commissioners, Service providers (primary, community, including third sector, secondary and tertiary care providers of health and social care services, including criminal justice agencies) work with commissioners to design local referral pathways for domestic violence and abuse and ensure that health and social care practitioners offer referrals to these specialist services to people perpetrating domestic violence or abuse. Health and social care practitioners are aware of local referral pathways and offer people perpetrating domestic violence or abuse referrals to specialist services. Commissioners (NHS England local area teams, clinical commissioning groups and local

authorities) ensure that referral pathways and a full range of specialist services are in place for people perpetrating domestic violence or abuse.

What the quality statement means for service users - People who are violent towards or abuse people close to them are offered referral to specialist services that can help them to change their views and understand more about violence. These specialist services can make it easier for them to get the help and support that they need to change their behaviour.

Commission and evaluate programmes for perpetrators- Establish an integrated commissioning strategy. Health and wellbeing boards and commissioners who commission perpetrator interventions should: Commission robust evaluations of the interventions to inform future commissioning. Identify, and link with, existing initiatives that work with people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse. Commission tailored interventions for people who perpetrate domestic violence and abuse in accordance with national standards and based on the local needs assessment.

Financially maintaining a perpetrator programme in Oxfordshire

Making Changes has annual running costs of around £60,000. Costs for this have been met from Oxford City Council's Safer Cities Partnership, Thames Valley Police and Housing Associations as well as some individual contributions from men attending the programme. No funding to date has been received from Oxfordshire County Council. Funding has paid for Duluth training of facilitators, a pool of facilitators and observers to deliver the weekly programmes and for a case manager to manage the referral and assessment process, link with partners and the victims of abuse to ensure their safeguarding and work with other agencies such as social care to feedback men's attendance etc. In February 2016 the decision was made to suspend any future referrals of abusive men onto the programme while the Board reviewed its financial situation due to a lack of funding. The programme will end in August 2016 when the current men complete their 27 weeks.

OCC's statutory duty to safeguard children

This report is aware that OCC social workers have increasingly referred abusive fathers to the Making Changes programme in Oxfordshire for the last 3 years. In doing so, OCC has been able to meet its statutory duty to safeguard children by ensuring abusive fathers have access to a local 27 week perpetrator programme. The main users of the programme are male carers involved with Oxfordshire social care. The author is aware of a number of fathers who completed the programme and were then considered less of a risk to their children by OCC social care and social workers and were removed from the Child Protection plans that had been in place.

Next steps to secure a protective factor for children

The Making Changes service has predominantly been used by male carers of children that Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for safeguarding. To date funding for this perpetrator programme has come from Oxford City Council and Thames Valley Police. Currently there is not enough funding to continue to run the programme. The author made Oxfordshire County Council senior managers aware of this situation in 2016. This has been acknowledged as a gap by OCC strategic leads and is being considered at a senior level as part of the new service redesign. As Making Changes has unfortunately been required to suspend any further referrals in 2016, Oxfordshire County Council has no means to safeguard children by referring abusive fathers to a perpetrator programme. If a funding solution could be found between health, social care and children's service it would provide an additional protective factor for vulnerable children. The author is aware there may be potential funds to commission the 'Caring Dads' programme by Social care managers. This evidence based programme is used nationally by other local authorities and works specifically with fathers to reduce their abusive behaviours and build on their parenting skills. However, the author does not know the financial feasibility for social care to commission this programme or the time scale for its introduction.

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'OCC's new proposed settings in 2017 could help to signpost abusive fathers to a perpetrator programme earlier and help children to be safeguarded earlier.'

Having worked as a Dads support worker at a Children's Centre and as a facilitator for Making Changes I appreciate the need for services around domestic abuse and the importance of signposting men interventions. I meet men who can benefit from developing their respectful behaviours but they are not necessarily known by Social Services or on Child Protection Plans. I am able to work with men 1:1 at the centre to help them become more self aware of their behaviours. They are then more likely to self refer themselves to the programme. I am aware of 3 fathers from my setting that have gone on to access the programme this way. If OCC's new service model of Children and Family Centres provide some open access to fathers they will be able to then support abusive men to self refer themselves to interventions that safeguard children. Social services have also played a positive role in signposting abusive men to this programme, but their role often occurs after significant abuse has already taken place.

Martin Andrews, Making Changes facilitator & OCC Fathers' Practitioner.

How is this father-inclusive?

- Making Changes is a male-only programme that is specifically aimed at men and fathers.
- The programme is delivered in a father-inclusive manner as it is offered in evening times and facilitated by male and female workers trained to work with men.
- A high percentage of the men who attend Making Changes are fathers.
- Making Changes has content specifically on 'respectful parenting for men' which motivates fathers to change their behaviours for themselves and their children and improves parenting skills.
- Fathers are motivated to attend the programme so that they can demonstrate to social services they are not a risk to their child and can have contact with them.
- A recent study shows that fathers attending Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes can improve the outcomes for their children and partners by reducing the risk of their abuse.
- OCC social workers use Making Changes to safeguard children from abusive fathers.
- OCC social care may commission the similar 'Caring Dads' programme that works specifically with fathers, their parenting skills and abusive behaviours.

"Domestic abuse is prevalent in our society, with 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experiencing it in their lifetime. As a society we have focused on supporting survivors and children who are affected by it. However an abuser will go from one victim to another, and few receive sanctions from the criminal justice system. To stop repeated abuse and the impact that has on families we need to be assisting men to change their behaviour. Making Changes is a community programme for men who recognise that they are hurting the ones they love and want to have happier, healthier relationships and be better fathers."

Liz Jones, Making Changes Case Load Manager

FAMILIES NEED FATHERS



Families Need Fathers has over 50 UK branches offering support to families following a separation. The branch in Oxfordshire has been actively supporting male carers for the last 8 years at fortnightly meetings. This is a brief summary of the support this group provides local fathers and the next steps needed to engage separated fathers in services.

Key findings

- ◆ The Oxford branch Chair is Rick Tanner. He attended meetings himself when he needed support to gain access to his children.
- ◆ The Oxford branch has had 200 fathers contact them for support since 2007.
- ◆ Meeting enable fathers to be introduced to a McKenzie Friend who can represent a father in court for a reduced fee. This method is under review. If removed it would affect separated fathers who cannot afford high legal fees.
- ◆ Children's Centres have referred separated fathers to the FNF Oxfordshire Branch for support and FNF have referred fathers to OCC services that include dads.
- ◆ FNF members attended OPF's fathers seminar in 2015 and raised concerns about services not including separated fathers.
- ◆ OCC will need to consult separated fathers if it wants a whole family approach.
- ◆ More information on the charity at fnf.org.uk

Background

Families Need Fathers (FNF) is the UK's leading shared parenting charity. It is chiefly concerned with supporting all parents, dads, mums and grandparents to have personal contact and meaningful relationships with children following parental separation. They offer information, advice and support services to help parents to achieve a positive outcome for their children. Its forum and network of over 50 UK branches also offer the pro-bono guidance of solicitors and others familiar with the operation of the family courts.

FNF Oxfordshire Branch

The Oxford branch has been operating since 2007. It was initially based near the BMW car plant and grew in popularity as separated fathers sought a means of local advice and support. It has since moved its monthly meetings to a public house on the Abingdon road. The Oxford branch has had 200 fathers contact them for support since 2007. It continues to have a steady influx of fathers that are seeking ways to get advice and peer to peer support from men who have previously gone through the same legal system to gain access to their children. Meetings tend to involve:

- Announcement that FNF has a policy of carers not blaming or using disrespectful language towards ex-partners during meeting discussions.
- How to access mediation services and avoid court.
- If court proceedings are unavoidable, an explanation of court processes and terminology used in court cases.
- An introduction to McKenzie Friends who can represent carers in court for a reduced fee should carers have no option but to use legal means to gain access to their children.

Rick Tanner is the branch Chair. He believes that FNF's starting point is that children should have significant contact with both carers following a separation, as this improves the outcomes for children. He believes there is a misunderstanding of 'risk' in the family courts that a separating father must have harmed his children or partner. He believes the reality is that most separating carers are the safe option, most put the interests of their children's first and carer's real needs are how to have ongoing contact with their children once a relationship is at an end. The Oxford branch approach is based around men keeping communication open and respectful with their ex-partners and children. At the meetings fathers get to 'tell their story' with peers they can relate to in a non threatening environment. This enables the fathers to process their current situation and accept the necessary steps they need to take. Rick volunteers his time for free to look through fathers' legal documents and check the men's understanding of legal terminology as dads cannot always afford legal advice. Court costs are a major barrier for separated fathers. The branch has access to three McKenzie Friends that attend meetings and offer free initial consultations to fathers, often helping men to write an initial page statement, what is likely to happen in court and remind fathers to focus on their positive care giving role.



Example of a separated father who attended the FNF branch in Oxford - This information is anonymised and reproduced with the kind permission of the male carer: The father first came to the Oxford branch meetings in 2010. This was soon after a separation and he was wanting to gain contact with his 3 year old daughter. The father was welcomed by the group and he discussed his situation. This led to further discussions about how he could navigate upcoming court proceedings which he had no experience of. The group provided the father with moral support from fathers who had gone through the same legal process. The father continued to attend meeting while he completed 33 different court hearings. Following the completion of court proceeding his daughter now lives with him permanently. The father's feedback stated: "Over the last 5 years Families Need Fathers have been of immense value, guidance and support. Having access to members who have been through similar situations gave me the practical advice I needed as a separated dad. The process can be very isolating, having the support of FNF is about solidarity."

Family services including separated fathers

A FNF member attended OPF's 2015 seminar, 'Future- proofing fathers work'. He explained to the Q&A panel the institutional barriers that separated fathers face from local services. This includes the way services still consider male carers that do not live with their children as being less important to children's outcomes as female resident carers and consequently men do not receive the same level of support. He cited examples of fathers experiencing institutional barriers, including not being able to access medical records or receive letters from schools even though they had Parental responsibility and posed no risk.

The seminar also raised the issue of Ofsted's previous framework not being flexible enough to take into account development work with separated fathers by Children's Centres nationally. FNF raised the issue of whether OCC's proposed new service model of Children and Family centres in 2017 would have the same capacity to offer separated fathers open access to stay and plays with their children as its existing service model and if there would be the same number of Children's Centres currently used to provide contact sessions for court ordered contact across Oxfordshire. Seminar delegates recommended for this report that OCC strategic leads could organise a consultation with service managers, separated fathers, CAFCASS and mediation services to look at the issues raised by FNF and ways of including separated fathers.



FNF member at OPF seminar, 2015

FAMILY MATTERS



Ida Forster is the Project Manager of the Family Matters service. The pilot was introduced for separating parents, to provide them with the support and information they need to get through their break-up in a way that's best for their family. The Department of Work and Pensions chose Oxford to pilot the service from April 2013 to September 2015. The service supported over 600 separating carers and of these 40% were fathers. This work included joint practice with a Children's Centre to target fathers.

Key findings

- ◆ Research by RELATE shows that 42% of marriages end in divorce and almost half of divorces involve children under 16 years.
- ◆ The Family Mediation Council believe offering mediation to separated families means improves children's outcomes.
- ◆ DWP's 'Help and Support for Separated Families' Innovation Fund' delivered a 2 and a half year pilot in Oxfordshire.
- ◆ Family Matters, based at Turpin & Miller solicitors in Oxford offered free mediation and legal advice to carers.
- ◆ The pilot supported 603 disadvantaged parents in Oxford up to August 2015. 40% of these were fathers.
- ◆ To engage more dads, free legal advice sessions were offered to separated dads at a local Children's Centre.
- ◆ Fathers stated this helped them to access mediation, it reduced conflict with ex partners and they focussed more on their children's needs.

Background

The Family Matters pilot is run by Resolution, an organisation of 6,500 family lawyers and other professionals in England and Wales that believe in a constructive, non-confrontational approach to family law matters. Resolution supports the development of family lawyers through its national and regional training programmes, through publications and good practice guides. It trains and accredits mediators and is the only body providing training and support for collaborative lawyers in England and Wales. Resolution has a 'Code of Practice', which sets out the principles of a non-confrontational approach to family law matters and this has been adopted by the Law Society. The code requires lawyers to deal with each other in a civilised way and to encourage their clients to put their differences aside and reach fair agreements.



Department of Work and Pensions

In 2013, the Department of Work and Pensions chose Resolution to deliver initial two year Family Matter pilots in Oxford, Newcastle and Crewe. The Government invested £669,000 towards the pilots as a means to provide family lawyers for hard to reach families. This was in response to Whitehall's own cuts to public money towards civil Legal Aid that reduced the opportunity for separating carers to access free support. The pilots were seen as a way for families to access mediation and legal advice from a solicitor instead of ending up in the courts.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- As a pilot, there was a finite time Family Matters was offered to families. Funding streams are being explored to continue this service.
- An existing family mediation service, Oxford Family Mediation is available in the area and can be used by family services to signpost separating carers.
- Feedback from some fathers stated that ex-partners avoided attending arranged sessions, were reluctant to engage in negotiations and did not want them to have access with their children.
- Feedback from some mothers stated that ex-partners avoided attending arranged sessions, were reluctant to engage in negotiations and did not make maintenance payments until granted access to their children.
- Family Matters Guides had to balance dealing with accusations of domestic violence alongside supporting carers who were not perpetrators of abuse.
- Some separating carers still ended up going to court after attending mediation sessions.
- Ofsted's current framework has been suspended. It would be helpful if its new framework allows family services to develop work with separated fathers without fear of being downgraded if they provide initial low reach figures. This would be an incentive for local authorities to develop fathers work, meet Key Performance Indicators to engage fathers and safeguard children during separation.

Separation statistics

Figures published by RELATE:

- In 2011, 27% of couples cohabiting when their child was born will have separated by the time the child is aged 5.
- 42% of marriages end in divorce and almost half of divorces involve children under 16 years.
- Family breakdown has been estimated to cost the taxpayer almost £46 Billion in 2013 through effects on health, extra housing support, lost work hours, legal aid and other related factors.
- In 2010-2011, one third of all children aged 16 and under were not living with both of their birth parents.
- 8.8% of lone-parent families are lone-father families, the remainder are lone mother families.

The impact of separation on children

Research compiled by One Plus One:

- Children of separated couples will experience greater poverty.
- Children whose biological parents have split up have worse outcomes in terms of social, emotional and cognitive development, on average.
- Children of separated parents are also more likely to have behavioural problems, exhibit anti-social behaviour and to take part in substance misuse.
- Children of separated couples tend to perform worse at school and have poorer future employment prospects.
- Children of separated couples are less likely to have successful relationships themselves as adults.

The benefits of mediation over the courts

The Family Mediation Council states the benefits as:

- It gives you more say about what happens, rather than the judge deciding everything.
- It's less stressful, with less conflict between you and your ex-partner.
- The agreements you make can be changed if your circumstances change.
- It can be less upsetting or damaging for children and helps them continue important family relationships.
- It is quicker & cheaper than drawn-out court battles.

Family Matters meets the needs of vulnerable carers

"Family Matters is a service for low-income, disadvantaged families facing separation and divorce who have no recourse to legal aid. Our Guides – by combining their legal expertise and mediation skills – provide a 'holding hand', supporting parents through their break-up- in a way that causes as little disruption as possible to their own lives and those of their children.

Splitting up or getting divorced is one of the most stressful life events for a family. As well as legal issues, separating mums and dads face additional problems such as finding a new place to live, coping with reduced income, and changes in childcare arrangements. They also have to face the challenge of parenting apart while dealing with the anger, loss and anxiety caused by the bereavement of separation.

People at the margins of society often have extra obstacles to face such as debt, substance dependence, domestic violence or immigration issues. They need specialist support, often from a range of sources, and can lack the knowledge and confidence to work through the issues they face on their own. Family Matters works to prevent their situation spiralling out of control, causing longer term problems for the parents, the children and ultimately for society more broadly.

The legal backdrop has undergone massive fundamental change - access to justice for those on low incomes is now almost non-existent after the 2013 cuts to legal aid. 200,000 fewer families are now eligible for help. Disadvantaged parents often have nowhere to turn for help. Family Matters is free where one parent receives a benefit or earns less than the Living Wage. By identifying the practical, legal and emotional issues separating mums and dads face, we help families develop a plan, work through it with them, and find and use local services that are available to help them." **Ida Forster, Family Matters Project Manager.**

Family Matters service in Oxford

The Family Matters pilot was based in East Oxford at Turpin & Miller solicitors. It was promoted locally on BBC Radio Oxford and Oxfordshire Family information Service. Marjorie Dennet-Clayton and Melanie Barnes were the Guides who delivered the service. Melanie Barnes is a qualified solicitor, and Marjorie Dennett-Clayton is a qualified legal executive. They offered separating families face to face legal advice and supported them to access mediation sessions.

They would first meet with ex-couples individually to identify and discuss issues in relation to their children. If possible, both partners would have a meeting together to talk about what practical steps need to be taken, and to work out an action-plan for the future. This could include discussing their separation with their children, contacting a mediation service or even working out how the bills or maintenance will be paid until a final agreement is reached.

A key objective would be for parents to learn how to communicate again, breaking the damaging cycles of confrontation that are often a feature of relationship breakdown and avoiding court, which sometimes only exacerbates an already difficult situation. As a result of their interventions, the Oxford Guides expected separating couples to have a better understanding of the options open to them in working through their separation, focus more on the needs of their children and have the skills to parent apart.



District Judge Payne with Family Matters Guide Marjorie Dennett-Clayton at an event in Oxford celebrating Family Matters first year anniversary.

Family Matters support 'journey' typically runs as follows:

- *Action planning on 'crisis' needs* – the mental and physical health of the parent or their child(ren), safeguarding issues, debt management, benefits and housing needs etc and an explanation of any relevant legal issues.
- *Addressing longer-term needs* – communication between the parents, relationship building, understanding children's needs and parenting apart.
- *Facilitating working together* – to agree and implement solutions for the best arrangements for their children. This may include referral to mediation.



Family Matters working with local agencies in Oxford:

In Oxford, Family Matters have built strong relationships with other local organisations:

- Family Justice - the courts, Family Justice Board, barristers and solicitors firms.
- Statutory services - social services, Early Intervention Hub, Thriving Families, Family Assessment & Safeguarding Service, GPs, Health visitors, schools, including Home School Link workers, police, probation service and housing services.
- Oxfordshire County Council & Voluntary sector - Children's centres and family centres, including Donnington Doorstep, Grandpont Children's Centre and North Abingdon Children's Centre, mediation services including Oxfordshire Family Mediation and Focus Mediation, A2 Dominion, Connection Floating Support, Citizen's Advice Bureaus, Emmaus Homelessness Charity, Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre, Autism Support, Relate.

Family Matters total reach of separated carers in Oxford:

Family Matters supported 603 disadvantaged parents from June 2013 to August 2015 who would not have otherwise had access to free legal advice and support.

Family Matters reach of separated fathers in Oxford:

A total of 241 fathers were supported, equal to 40% of all carers seen.

Family Matters reach of separated BME fathers in Oxford:

29% of the men who used the service in the second year of the project declared their ethnicity as something other than White British.

Family matters satisfaction survey of the total people supported in Oxford:

96% found the information and support they had received to be beneficial

64% felt more positive about their situation

78% of parents felt better able to take action after seeing a Family Matters Guide

72% had a better understood the benefits of making arrangements together to better meet their children's needs.

Work with separated fathers at Grandpont Children's Centre

"Family Matters is completely neutral as to whether a parent is a father or mother and focusses on the child's need to have a relationship with both their parents."

Family Matters believes that to improve the outcomes of children during a family separation, both carers need to be involved in the mediation process. It therefore makes sense to ensure an equal number of fathers as mothers access and benefit from the service in Oxford. Family Matters Guide, Melanie Barnes recognised there were institutional barriers that separated fathers faced that could reduce the likelihood of them accessing her support directly. She acknowledged that fathers felt excluded from traditional early years family services, which are predominantly delivered for the needs of mothers. She was aware that fathers were not always regular users of family services such as Children's Centres and she felt this could reduce men accessing support from Family Matters. In order for both genders of carers to have an equal opportunity to access the service, Melanie felt she would need to work with local Children's Centres and actively meet and engage separated fathers.

This led to joint work between herself and the Dads Worker at Grandpont Children's Centre for a 6 month period during 2014.

- Grandpont Children's Centre organised a series of monthly daytime Family Matters advice sessions, hosted by Melanie. Both mothers and fathers were able to access the one to one sessions, but the centre's Dads worker specifically identified, targeted and signposted local separated fathers.
- An additional evening session was organised at the centre so that working separated fathers could still meet with Melanie one to one.
- A final evening session was arranged for separated fathers to meet with Melanie and give 'sounding board' feedback about the experiences of separated fathers accessing family services and support in Oxfordshire.
- This targeted work led to 11 separated fathers having free 1:1 advice sessions with Melanie at the centre. The fathers often accessed multiple sessions over the 6 month period.
- This targeted work contributed somewhat to the overall increase in both genders accessing the Family Matters service in Oxfordshire, which reached a final total of 40% of carers being fathers and 60% being mothers.

Case studies of separated fathers

Case studies were produced by the Dads worker of separated male carers who received advice from the Family Matters Guide at Grandpont Children's Centre in 2014. The worker tracked the fathers 6 months later to determine if there had been any impact from this support and gathered feedback. The fathers gave consent for anonymised case studies to be published. Please note - Public domain images used are not of the male carers involved in the case studies.



**FREE & CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE
FOR SEPARATING FAMILIES FROM
A MEDIATION TRAINED LAWYER**

**MONDAY 12TH MAY
10 am - 12 pm**

At Grandpont Children's Centre
Whitehouse rd, Oxford, OX1 4QH

- MEDIATION ADVICE FOR ONE OR BOTH SEPARATED CARERS
- ADVICE ON ORGANISING A HOME & MONEY ACTION PLAN
- GET FREE LEGAL ADVICE & DISCUSS VISIT ARRANGEMENTS
- ADVICE FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING SEPARATION

More info: resolution.org.uk/familymatters

Please contact staff beforehand in the Family Room
at Grandpont Children's Centre on 01865242900
to arrange a 'timed slot' with a
mediation solicitor from Turpin
& Miller's 'Family Matters' service

Grandpont
Children's Centre

Part of the Oxford City Council

Separated Male Carer 1: The father had previously been the main carer to his two children under 5. Following separation from the mother, the male carer was keen to remain in the family home and continue to take care of the children. This presented a challenge financially as the father was not working at the time and the working mother needed to find additional funds for her separate housing. The mother was unable to attend mediation. The father met with Melanie on several occasions to work through financial, housing, legal and child caring arrangements. The father worked on a plan that he felt more confident in discussing and negotiating with his ex-partner so they could avoid further conflict and the need to go to court. When tracked 6 months later the father confirmed there has been a period of stability for the children as he remained the main carer for them in the family home. The father has gone on to gain permanent employment, he has attended wellbeing workshops for men at the centre and started volunteering at a local school. Regular contact between the children and the mother has been established and they have avoided the need to go to court to resolve matters.



Separated Male Carer 2: The father and mother had previously co-parented their 5 year old child. Following separation, the mother was keen to take over full time care of the child and was reluctant to attend mediation or involve the father in their daughter's child care. The mother moved away from the area with the child and removed her from the local school. There were no allegations of abuse made by the mother and the father had always contributed equally financially to the families needs. The father requested to his ex-partner that they meet together with Melanie at the centre. The mother agreed initially but then did not attend. The father continued to meet with Melanie one to one to work on a plan to negotiate with the mother and avoid having to go to court to apply for contact. When tracked 6 months later, the father confirmed he was contributing to his ex-partner's new rental costs and he and the paternal grandmother had regular weekend overnight contact with his daughter in Oxford. This had been achieved without the need for court proceedings. The father and paternal grandparent both gave positive feedback of the support they had received from Melanie and centre staff.



Separated BME Male Carer 3: Following separation from the mother, a BME father who had not previously attended the Children's centre requested an appointment to access mediation and advise support from Melanie. There had been conflict between the carers about custody, CAFCASS involvement and court proceedings were underway. The father was keen to establish equal custody of his children. The father went on to attend both the monthly daytime and evening one to one advice sessions with Melanie at the centre. The mother did not attend the sessions. During this period the father continued to request for equal custody of his children and there were further court proceedings. Although the court case continued, there was an increase in the father's attendance at the centre with his children. He went on to complete a 6 week parenting skills programme for dads, an 8 week Healthy Relationships and Wellbeing programme for dads and completed the Adult Learning 'Level 1 In Child care' qualification, all at the centre. This demonstrated that by having Melanie deliver advice sessions at an early years settings, a father developed more effective parenting skills with his children and become a more positive resource for their care. When tracked 6 months later, the father provided positive feedback regarding him receiving Family Matters advice and his increased attendance at Grandpont Children's Centre.

"Yes, my time with the children has quite substantially increased, and also the quality of time spent has greatly improved. I have learnt some valuable insight, especially with reference to parenting skills, conflict resolution, different perspectives & views, better communication etc. Not to mention that the advice from Family Matters that has also helped me to understand the legal guidelines/process." **BME Male Carer**

"The support I received at Grandpont Children's Centre has been a life-saver in enabling me to remain in contact with my daughter."

Separated male carer

Separated Young Male Carer 4: The young father and mother had previously co-habited and co-parented their 1 year old baby daughter. Following separation, the mother was keen to be the main carer and was reluctant for the father to have access to his daughter. There was no involvement by Social Services and centre staff did not consider the father a risk to his child. The mother wanted the father put in place child maintenance payments, when this did not happen she refused to allow the father to have contact with his daughter unless it was at the centre. The mother moved out of the area and refused contact between the child and the paternal grandparents. This situation was a challenge for the carers to trust each other and avoid going to court. The father agreed to attend mediation at the Family Matters office and had further advise sessions at the Children's centre. The mother was invited to attend, but refused. Although the father was keen to go to court to establish his legal rights to contact he was fearful of the costs and disruption and chose not to. When tracked 6 months later, the young father confirmed he had gained full time employment for the first time in his life, he had begun child maintenance payments and tensions had reduced with his ex-partner. The father visited the centre 6 months later with his daughter to tell staff the mother had agreed for him and the paternal grandparents to have unsupervised contact and overnight stays. He thanked staff for helping him to access mediation support and avoiding going to court.

Practitioner's reflections on supporting separated fathers in Oxford

Institutional barriers: *"In my work at Family Matters I found that many services treated fathers generally as either unimportant or a potential risk. For example, I recall asking one children's centre whether they offered any groups for fathers and she told me only that they ran a perpetrator programme, I have also been frustrated by not finding groups that are offered throughout Oxfordshire for fathers on a regular basis. My experience from the men I have worked with is that they are often keen to be involved in their children's lives and are distraught when they feel that they may be excluded. Often their experience is that there is a marked imbalance of power when negotiating about children and feel frustrated that they have to jump through "hoops" to prove they will not harm them. Men become involved in our scheme mostly because they seek information with problems spending time with their children; are struggling as main carers with housing or benefits, or engage because the other parents has contacted the scheme.*

Dads Sessions and contact venues: *"I have found that many fathers I spoke to were enthusiastic about male led groups such as Saturdads groups. But many centres' offer groups only once or twice a month. For fathers who work full-time, this reduces their time with the child or children to only a few hours once a fortnight or month if the relationship with the other parents is difficult. As there are some large factories in Oxford, a significant number of men also worked shifts and so committing to a group only run once or twice a month was also problematic."*

Vulnerable fathers and post natal support: *"Many of the families we met with were also from the short-relationship-low-parental-endorsement group, with separation taking place within the first year of a child's life. A father, especially a young father, may feel overwhelmed by the pressure that often comes by taking the role of breadwinner or provider; a burden that is not often talked about or acknowledged. Mothers often have the support of a health-visitor and I was not surprised to see men are often excluded from that care-process. I saw a few men who started to become depressed in those early months, leading to behaviour like detachment or drinking, and then followed by a breakdown in the relationship. Because of their response, often the mother, and the wider family, blamed the father for "letting the family down" and in turn became resistance to contact. I asked each father in that situation whether or not they had anyone to support them through pregnancy and the early months and I think that only one father had contact with the health visitor. It seemed that this disconnection and inner-struggle at an early stage in the relationship was often pivotal in the break-up, and families could perhaps be better supported if men were also treated as vulnerable during this stage. As for interventions, many fathers already felt "judged", whilst Mothers were perhaps more open to groups as they were often aware of them through the local Children's Centre and felt supported rather than criticised by family support services.*

Oxfordshire Children's Centres including separated fathers: *"Overall, I would say that Saturdads was the most popular group, followed by more specific support run through the children's Centres. I attended the groups led at Grandpont Children's Centre for fathers."*



Melanie Barnes is a consultant solicitor, mediator and Family Matters Guide. Her experience includes civil claims on behalf of unmarried couples, child maintenance claims and divorce. She is an author and policy advisor on international maintenance claims.

"I am pleased that fathers have found such meaningful support at Grandpont Children's Centre. I was disappointed that other Children's Centres or services are not engaging or offering support to fathers in the same way."

Melanie Barnes, Family Matters.

Service gap for abusive women and male victims: *"We found a lack of support for violent and abusive women. In Oxfordshire, it appears perpetrator programmes are only available to men.*

Change needed in local services approach to fathers: *"My own view is that fathers should be embraced for the energy, commitment and care that they show for their children. Support should assume, in the same way that it does with mothers, that they will be loving and are capable of positive relationships with their children. That way, safe-guarding is incorporated into support, rather than the first step being for men to prove that they do not intend to harm children, and can be rewarded with a few hours of contact if they achieve this."*

"I believe there needs to be a 'game change' in local services, for families to truly benefit from the care and love of both parents." Melanie Barnes, Family Matters.

Development work with separated families

Grandpont Children's Centre's work with separated families and its attempts to increase its reach of separated fathers was in response to requests by senior OCC managers that services were to engage and support the most vulnerable carers in their catchment. This work also met one of OCC's current Key Performance Indicators that states that services should specifically engage with fathers and lone parents: *"Increase the numbers and % of the following target groups living in the children's centre catchment that are reached by any centre: workless families, BME, lone parents, fathers"*. The Children's Centre was pleased that through its joint work with the Family Matters service they increased their engagement of local separated families, increased the attendance of families accessing free mediation advice sessions at the centre and increased their reach of separated fathers. Feedback from separated families stated that this work led to reduced levels of conflict, the reduction of unnecessary court appearances and a reduction in anxiety experienced by children during separation. Grandpont Children's Centre underwent an Ofsted inspection in 2014 shortly after this work with separated families had been completed. Ofsted awarded the centre a 'GOOD' grading and specifically commented about its inclusive work with fathers, stating: *"the centre has a higher proportion of fathers than seen elsewhere in the county who attend centre-run groups such as 'Me and My Dad', and take up targeted support to improve their health and well-being."* The Ofsted report made no reference to work with separated fathers. OPF understands that Ofsted's framework at the time only rewarded work which attains a high reach percentage and does not reward 'development work' with vulnerable carers, such as separated fathers, that may initially record low reach figures. This may account for the omission.

This report recommends that while Ofsted's current framework is currently suspended. It would be helpful if learning from the local authority's work with separated fathers can be included in the current consultation for Ofsted's new framework. By rewarding development work with families, Ofsted's new framework can ensure family services are not deterred from supporting separated families, promoting fathers work or committing to a whole family approach.

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'Agencies need to ensure both separating male and female carers have an equal right to access services, so that the needs of their children are properly met'

Successful work between Family Matters and the Children's Centre occurred because they held the common belief that both separating carers should be supported. OCC strategic leads delivering a new service model in 2017 may want to ensure settings are supporting both male and female separating carers equally to improve children's outcomes and are recording improved outcomes and including this data for future assessments of their settings.

DADS' CONSULTATION



In 2011 Oxfordshire County Council organised a Sounding Board so that fathers and male carers could share their experiences of accessing family services in the county. This is a summary of the report's findings and an evaluation of the impact this has had on fathers work.

Key findings

- ◆ 18 fathers from diverse backgrounds attended the County Hall Sounding Board. A further 12 fathers were interviewed and their feedback was included in the OCC report.
- ◆ Male carers provided mixed feedback about their experiences of accessing OCC family services, health services and social care.
- ◆ Some workers felt the exercise focussed on gathering feedback from fathers rather than meeting service gaps for fathers.
- ◆ Father-inclusive actions were drawn up for Children's Centres, Oxford Family Information Service, OPF Fathers' Champion Network, social care, Early Intervention Hubs and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.
- ◆ Some services successfully implemented the proposed actions points. Other services made little progress.
- ◆ Some workers felt the process was useful but would be strengthened by the support of service managers.

Background

In July 2011 Oxfordshire County Council organised a Sounding Board for fathers and male carers at County Hall.



This was part of the Oxfordshire Children Education and Families Directorate and was entitled, *"Why is it a mum's world & how can we support dads better?"* Toni Bremble from the Participation and Play Team contacted OPF Fathers' Champions and Dads workers at Children's Centres in order to arrange to meet local fathers and invite them to the consultation. Toni also arranged interviews with male carers at these settings for men who could not attend the consultation. In total, 18 fathers attended County Hall and a further 12 fathers provided feedback for the final report. Practitioners were also invited to the event, including Dads workers, Children's Centre managers, Oxfordshire Parenting Forum workers, Fathers Champions, Parenting programme facilitators, OCC's Oxford Family Information Service, social workers, Early Intervention Hub workers, members of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Thames Valley Police.

Significance of a Fathers Sounding Board

OPF Fathers' Champions Network and Dads workers were pleased that OCC had organised a Fathers' Sounding Board. Practitioners were already establishing popular dads sessions and services across the county. Workers felt this was an opportunity for OCC senior managers and strategic leads to listen to fathers' experiences of accessing services and champion father-inclusive practice across Oxfordshire services in order to begin mainstreaming this work in the county.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- OCC managers may want to reflect on successful practices with fathers since the 2011 Sounding Board, identified in this report, prior to launching its new family service model in 2017.
- The OCC Sounding Board supported the use of the evidence based Man Enough parenting programme. OCC no longer commission this programme but Action for Children do. OCC managers may need to show they have consulted the fathers who continue to attend this programme and professionals who continue to refer men to it before deciding against commissioning it again.
- Although some useful action points were delivered by services, it appears their scope was too limited. OCC managers may need to champion a 'cultural shift' in the way services work with men in order to reduce institutional barriers.
- OCC leads may want to reflect on whether its new service model in 2017 will provide it with enough capacity to meet the needs of fathers as both a resource and a risk to their children.
- OCC leads may want to reflect on who will champion fathers work in the future as Dads workers and Fathers champions have left OCC.
- No dads consultations have been completed by OCC since 2011. For a new service model to be designed around the needs of the whole family there will need to be further consultations with fathers, practitioners and managers.

Fathers' attendance and feedback

The event was well attended by a diverse range of male carers, including separated and BME fathers and fathers with babies and toddlers, pre-teens and teens. An additional event for young fathers was organised in the following weeks for men who may not have wanted to attend the main event. OPF Fathers' Champions based in OCC settings played a significant role in finding fathers who would participate in the consultation. All the fathers who attended the events provided a range of feedback. Additional feedback was gathered from fathers who were using services such as Children's Centres but were unable to attend on the day of the Sounding Board. This feedback was positive about the growing awareness of fathers work in Children's Centres, the employment of designated Dads workers, the expansion of father-inclusive sessions such as Saturdads groups and the availability of Man Enough, a single gender parenting programme for men.

"We need more Dads groups run on different days and be able to attend even if you don't have your children living with you."

"It's really hard for Dads in minority groups who split up. They sent me on Man Enough. Even though all the dads were from really different backgrounds I relaxed and enjoyed it. We need more courses for dads targeted at dads."

Fathers also provided feedback that there were areas of growth still needed in other services to include male carers. This had led to feeling of exclusion from health and postnatal services as the needs of mothers had been promoted by professionals over the role of fathers to the extent it reduced a whole family approach.

"If you don't get included at the early stages, you begin to get a bit withdrawn and resentful - it is hard to tell your partner that's how you feel too - so much is going on for her."

Fathers felt put off from attending services that offered no specific services for them as fathers.

"No one asks how you are, which seems to set the standard from then on - Dads as an accessory."

Separated fathers struggled to access family services focussed on supporting resident carers, mainly mothers, and which did not value the positive role of separated fathers as caregivers.

"When families separate it all stacks up against the dad - housing gets lost, nowhere to meet your kids, the cost, you feel driven away and helpless."

"I didn't know where to go or who to ask for help because I wouldn't go to a Children's Centre unless I had kids with me."

Fathers felt that some practitioners only focussed on men as a risk of abuse rather than as resources to their partners and children.

"What really bothers me is that every time our social worker rings they only talk to my girlfriend not me and don't seem to think about communicating with me."

Action points that services agreed to deliver from 2011 onwards

The consultation provided useful learning and actions points for individual services to take away so they could include fathers more effectively and deliver a whole family approach.

OCC Children's Centres

Children's Centre managers agreed to include dads' issues on weekly team agendas, encourage health professionals to use inclusive questions about the role of the father, provide a variety of dads' groups in the week and to support separated dads to access services with or without children.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

OSCB members agreed to have a page dedicated to dads on their website and commission training for working with dads.

Oxfordshire Family Information Service

OFIS agreed to hold an up to date list of fathers' groups in the week and Saturdads groups on its website and help increase information to dads through OPF's Oxondads website.

OPF Think Dad Task Group/Fathers' Champion Network

OPF agreed to support Dads workers to develop their practice, train up more Man Enough facilitators and offer more Man Enough parenting programme taster sessions in Children's Centres.

Early Intervention Hubs

Hubs managers agreed to make sure each had a Fathers' Champion, they were to be more explicit in CAF/TAC processes about having fathers' names on forms and engaging them in meetings and include awareness of working with dads in workforce induction training.

Social care

Social care managers agreed to assign a senior manager to be a Fathers' Champion.

Oxfordshire Children, Education and Families Directorate

Parent/Carer Sounding Board July 2011

"Why is it a Mum's world?" How can we support Dads better?

1 What did we do?

18 fathers attended the Sounding Board from diverse backgrounds. A further 12 fathers were interviewed who could not attend, but their feedback is included in this report.

2 Key themes

We covered 3 areas:

- a) Early experiences
- b) It's a Mum's world
- c) Separation, custody, and access

a) Early experiences (Health Services)

Dads felt left out at medical appointments, with there being only one chair, and all conversation directed at the mother:

"If you don't feel included at the early stages, you begin to get a bit withdrawn and resentful or you just push your way into it – you feel uncomfortable and it is hard to tell your partner that's how you feel too – so much is going on for her."

"When my girlfriend miscarried they didn't seem to consider my loss and I didn't know how to explain it."



Dads want to be involved in the whole process. They find it hard to know what services are out there:

"Once baby was born I was not able to stay at the hospital so then I didn't learn how to help her with feeding and all sorts."

"No one asks how you are, which seems to set the standards from then on – Dads as an accessory."

Dads would like help with the practical things such as bathing and holding, to feel useful. Good information would be helpful regarding antenatal and postnatal support – many Dads thought only NCT was available:

"We need encouragement to go to antenatal classes, help to understand what they're about and get involved. My missus had already had 2 children so didn't want to go to the classes – I felt like I couldn't go on my own but really wanted to learn about it, how I could help and what I needed to have to be ready."

b) It's a Mum's world

"One of the most important things is your confidence as a Dad, you are always learning and trying to get it right."

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Dads felt it was good to have male only sessions so they could share experiences away from women, and one Dad said they might feel more comfortable if there were more men in the workforce. It is important to recognise that Mums and Dads need a different things – a different language should be used.

"We need more Dads groups run on different days and be able to attend even if you don't have your children with you."

"Society need to recognise that Dads get depressed too and can get post natal depression. When I was depressed I didn't realise and it came out in mood swings which frightened the family."

Promotion and information around parenting, and services and support is all targeted to women, lots of advertising has Mums' faces on it:

"The domestic abuse posters have pictures of women as victims and are aimed at women, all these posters are on the walls in children's settings and you start to feel as if Dads are bad people."

"People are sometimes suspicious of Dads doing the child care and wanting to take an interest in their kids' development, the media doesn't help because of the high profile cases of male paedophiles. If you think about it too much you would never go anywhere with your kids."

It was felt that systems within our society weren't as accommodating to Dads as to Mums:

"As a Dad I often feel ignored, at school

pick up, health visitor appointments. When I went with my girlfriend to PCAMHs [Primary Child and Adolescent Mental Health] for an appointment about our daughter it was all directed to Mum and not me. It makes you lose confidence in yourself."

"Me and my girlfriend had our youngest voluntarily taken into the care of my Mum. We are now clean and really want her back with us full time, but what really bothers me is that every time our social worker rings they only talk to my girlfriend not me, even when she's on the toilet they ask me to get her to ring back – and don't seem to think about communicating with me."

c) Separation and Custody: How do Dads ask for help?

"My solicitor told me about the Man Enough course, I didn't know where to go or who to ask for help because I wouldn't go into a children's centre unless I had kids with me, I wouldn't ask my kids' teachers or the local health visitor because it didn't seem right. I did talk to my GP because I was feeling really low about it, he suggested I talk to a solicitor."

Information about processes and procedures for Dads who don't live with their children and the impact on their children are needed:



"When families separate it all stacks up against the Dad – housing gets lost, nowhere to meet your kids, the cost, all the benefits are in Mum's name, you feel driven away and powerless. Then you feel scared to ask for help in case they think you aren't coping."

Dads said it would be good to have some information on their rights:

"It is difficult to understand the processes when you split up with partners. Some Dads had come to informal agreements between themselves; other Dads had gone to solicitors."

Solicitors were the main source of advice on access issues for separated Dads, despite it having a huge impact on their children.

"When you split up most letters and reports and communication seems to go to the Mum so you are totally out of the loop, which puts you at a disadvantage."

"One minute I'm allowed to see [the kids] and the next I'm not, it's hard not to get really angry. You then forget about the kids and how they must be feeling."



"Me and my girlfriend had a fight, I got put in the holding cell for 9 hours and then sent home, they didn't offer me any support around how to manage my feelings. She got victim support offered and phone call support, I got nothing and now its on my record."

"Some young Dads I know when they split up with their girlfriends just assume they don't have a family anymore – the grief is really hard to explain."

"It's really hard for Dads in minority groups who split up, the cultural issues are complicated and it is even harder to know where to go to for some support and guidance."

"They sent me on Man Enough as an order so I could get access to my children. It took a few weeks but even though all the Dads were from really different backgrounds I relaxed and enjoyed it. We all had similar problems and it really helped me understand my kids and why they do things they do. Not enough people and services know about Man Enough and because it seems to be the only thing out there to educate Dads specifically about parenting I think it needs to be promoted more and we need more courses for Dads targeted at Dads."

"I have 2 hours supervised contact a week with my baby son, because I hit him when he was 2 months old. I think it went wrong for me because he didn't want to be held by me ever, he always wanted his Mum and he was quite colicky and 8 weeks of no sleep, no one to talk to and it seemed no way out of the situation – I felt useless and no help to my son or his Mum. I am so

ashamed of what I did. My girlfriend can't contact me unless it is through the social worker – so I don't know if I will miss that moment when he crawls for the first time, or talks – it is so tough."

"Its all about Education and Awareness within our workforce of these issues for Dads." (Professional)

"More information needs to be shared on the impact on Dads around custody issues." (Professional)

"Its wonderful to see the county make such an effort in pushing Dads' issues and support to the forefront like this." (Dads worker)

Actions

Children's Centres will:

- Aim to include Dads' issues on their team agendas at every meeting.
- Encourage health professionals when using their setting to have inclusive questions about fathers / to fathers in their entire practise.
- Aim to have a variety of Dads' groups on throughout the week to ensure availability.
- Ensure Dads' groups make it clear that fathers can come for support even if they do not have full access to their children and on days they don't have their children.

OFIS will:

- Hold an up to date list of fathers' groups – both those in the week and Saturdads.
- Continue to keep up to date and increase information for Dads through their Oxondads website.

Think Dad will:

- Continue to support and encourage Dads workers to develop their practise to be inclusive to all Dads.
- Train up more Man Enough Trainers.
- Continue to offer Man Enough taster sessions at Children's Centres.

Social Care will:

- Assign a senior manager to be a Dads' Champion.

Dads will:

- Look into an online forum for Dads to encourage more information and discussion for them online.

Early Intervention Service will:

- Make sure each Hub has a Dads' champion.
- Be more explicit in CAF / TAC processes about having the Dad's name on the forms and working to involve and engage them in meetings.
- Include awareness of working with Dads in their workforce induction training

OSCB will:

- Have a page dedicated to Dads on their website and commission training for working with Dads.



This is a Participation & Play Team publication. For a copy of this report please email:
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The impact of the consultation in developing father-inclusive practice

The author acknowledges good work by Toni Bremble who organised the consultation at County Hall on behalf of OCC. Toni visited fathers in Children's Centres, arranged for practitioners and senior managers to attend and commit to action points and she produced the final report. This process was successful in gathering learning points on the day, raising the profile of fathers work in the county and involving strategic leads who attended the event. Many of the action points were delivered successfully following the event. However, this report could not find evidence for all the action points being delivered. Some actions points appeared too small in scope and others did not happen at all, possibly due to the fact senior managers were not nominated by their services to champion and oversee the process. In one case, an action point agreed at the consultation was later reversed. Health service managers did not attend the consultation or commit to any action points to become more father-inclusive so this service is not examined.

OCC Children's Centres

The author acknowledges good work by Early Years and Childcare Services following OCC's Sounding Board. These services have continued their successful engagement of fathers. There was an expansion of dads groups organised by centres, an increased use of Dads workers at centres, an increased use of gender-differentiated services for fathers and a commitment to champion fathers' work by those practitioners who regularly attended OPF Fathers' Champion Network meetings. 9 Children's Centres that completed an OPF Dads Test in 2013 stated that they included dads issues in their weekly agendas. This growth of fathers work was reflected in rapid increases in individual centres' reach of fathers with an under 5 year old in their catchment from 2011, particular centres that employed Dads workers and were committed to father-inclusive practice. Grandpont CC increased its reach of fathers with an under 5 year old by 7% from 2011 to 2012, rising from 40% to 47% of fathers, this was the highest total in the county. While the county average of all centres' reaching fathers also rose from 15.9% in 2011 to 19.1% in 2012, rising annually up until 2015 to 26.36%. This reach figure reversed to 24.3% by the end of 2015. This may be explained by cuts to the local authority budget, demands by managers for workers to target vulnerable fathers and staff uncertainty over the changes to the next service model. The action point to include more separated fathers saw Rose Hill CC and Blackbird Leys CC provide fathers with free mediation services and Grandpont CC work with the Department of Work and Pensions' Family Matters pilot to support fathers with free legal advice. However, the Ofsted reporting framework at the time was unable to acknowledge this work. The report recommends that the current consultation on Ofsted's new framework needs to recognise the importance of development work to reach targeted fathers, such as separated dads, even if this involves initial low reach figures. Children's Centres have encouraged joint work with health services to support fathers. Health visitors continue to work effectively with Children's Centres to support vulnerable fathers on Child Protection plans, Child In Need plans and TACs. The author was impressed with a Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group that worked cooperatively in the Banbury area, attended by Children's Centre and Hub managers, FNP and an OCC Area Manager.

Oxfordshire Family Information Service

The author acknowledges good work by OxonFis following OCC's Sounding Board. OxonFIS completed its action point to hold an up to date list of fathers' groups on its website. It worked closely with OPF to help increase information for dads on its Oxondads website. OxonFIS workers attended Saturdads sessions and Dads Go Wild play days to share information about services for fathers. OxonFis produced a useful pamphlet of dads groups that settings gave out to new fathers. This work led to OCC providing information for fathers on its current website via a range of video guides called 'Why Dads Matter' by the organisation Dad Talk. The report recommends that OCC managers look at ways to support Oxondads website and blog as a future signposting tool for fathers to access its new family service model.

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust

Note - OCCs Sounding Board refers solely to the OSCB and the action points it agreed to in 2011. When the author contacted the OSCB they requested that the report clarified their status:

The OSCB is a partnership body - it comprises of 34 local partners. It has a role to lead, improve practice and scrutinise multi-agency work with respect to the most vulnerable children. OSCB co-ordinates the child protection partnership and recommendations would need to be considered by both the OSCB and the Children's Trust. The Trust would analyse local need and check the understanding of local partners in order to consider what local response was necessary. The OSCB would be informed of this process then challenge the Trust to ensure that any resulting recommendations were considered and driven through effectively.

The OSCB's website contains an informative page dedicated to dads and professionals working with men. This provides links to OxonFIS and Saturdads groups, the Fatherhood Institute and the Barnardo's report, 'Are we nearly there yet?' The web page introduction states:

"National and local serious case reviews have repeatedly highlighted failures by professionals to effectively engage fathers or identify men who pose a risk to children. While this area is varied and complex, experts point to a number of key issues:

- *Emotional responses: Most children's social workers are female and may have emotional responses to men that are influenced by their childhood and experiences.*
- *Personal safety: Social workers may fear men who are hostile or even violent. A recent Community Care survey found many child protection workers feel unprotected, and often undermined, by their employers when trying to deal with hostile parents, which in turn affects their practice.*
- *Systemic problems: A lack of good supervision and systems to deal with violent or intimidating service users compounds the problem. There is also a shortage of high quality support programmes for fathers, particularly those who are violent.*
- *Gender and masculinity: Social workers often alienate men because they refuse to consider gender and masculinity issues."*

OSCBs website lists 10 Top Tips For Professionals Working With Male Carers:

1. Research theories of masculinity to try and understand the motivations of men involved in a case. For example, some men will resort to absence, violence or demanding their rights when they feel vulnerable, afraid or confused.
2. Men are often more powerfully motivated by the desire to be a good father than by the effect of their behaviour on women. A good starting point for engagement is to ask them, "What does it mean to be a good father?"
3. If a man is considered violent do home visits in pairs, with one worker questioning the father while the other focusses on the mother. Or invite the man to the office to be interviewed.
4. If a man is considered to be a risk to his children, provide support to help him try and change. If there are not enough perpetrator programmes in the area, give feedback to commissioners.
5. Do not demand a mother to be solely responsible for protecting her children. This reinforces the impression that a father is not responsible for his children.
6. Solution-focussed therapy, concentrating on strengths and showing how a man can influence a child's development, tends to be a more successful approach with men.
7. Try and get the father's details for every initial assessment you do and interview the father for every core assessment done.
8. Although men are more likely to threaten social workers, it is in fact women who are most likely to attack.
9. Men are perceptive of expectations of them. If a social worker has low expectations they will endeavour to live down to them.
10. Men need clear information. Research shows that often they do not see a defined role for themselves in plans and will assume "parent" actually means "mother".

The OSCB delivers over 150 free safeguarding training and learning events plus online learning each year. The training is overseen by a multi-agency subgroup. In 2015-16 the training reached over 9000 members of the Oxfordshire workforce. Most of the training is delivered by a volunteer training pool comprising members of the children's workforce and is free to the practitioner. As part of its programme the OSCB is commissioned by Public Health to deliver a series of training on 'working with men and boys'. This training, originally developed by the Spurgeon's work in 2013 has been amended and updated over the last three years by the OSCB training pool members. The training has been supported by an OPF Dads Champion during this time period, who co-presented further information on 'How to work with young fathers'. In order to further develop this work the OSCB now aims to increase the number of trainers for this subject and they are also requested to consider if the learning and improvement framework is identifying a need to develop a training specifically on working with fathers.

The report recommends that the Children's Trust and the OSCB consider the report, the evidence presented and consider a response based on further input from all local partners. OPF requests that the response includes consideration of:

- The creation of a Father's Charter and its promotion on the OSCBs website in order to encourage managers from social care and health services to sign up to father-inclusive practice.
- Identify and nominate Fathers Champions in senior management.
- Commission training for working with fathers and working with young fathers.
- Make links with national organisations and practitioners who are currently commissioned by local authorities to deliver training in working with dads should a voluntary pool of local practitioners be unavailable to deliver free specialist training.
- Examine the case study included in this report of a comparative Safeguarding Board who supported Bath and North East Somerset Council to strategically lead and champion a year long fathers' work campaign.
- A nominated Fathers Champion from the Children's Trust and the OSCB attends a forum alongside other senior manager of services to assist in taking forward the wider recommendations of this report.

The report believes that the Children's Trust and the OSCB are in a strong position to assist with the future delivery of training for working with fathers and this would play a significant part in supporting practitioners to work more effectively with male carers and safeguard children.

The author also welcomes plans by the OSCB to deliver training in 'Healthy Relationships' which can act as a safety factor to children during the current lack of funding in the county for work with men with abusive behaviours.

Early Intervention Hubs

The author acknowledges the increased use of father-inclusive practice by Early Intervention Hubs since 2011. This includes the increased numbers of fathers attending Man Enough and Take 3 parenting programmes delivered at Hubs by Hub workers. Individual Hub workers have championed fathers work in their own settings and fathers with under 5 and over 5 year olds have been supported by workers that have facilitated joint practice between Hubs and Children's Centres. Hub workers have signposted fathers to 'clustered' father-inclusive sessions run by services elsewhere. Clustered practice between Hubs and other services is a practical one with limited resources available for fathers work. This report recommends that a new integrated service model that supports 0-19 years will need to ensure individual settings develop their own capacity to support men and settings and also cluster support for fathers if they want to maximise father-inclusive practice and reach of men. Of the 2 Hubs who completed OPF's Dad Test audit in 2013, neither stated that they had introduced induction training in fathers work for their staff since 2011. This report recommends that in a new service model father-inclusive training is provided to family support and outreach staff so that it becomes everyone's responsibility to

support the whole family. The author understands that Hubs do not gather information of how many fathers with an over 5 year old they reach. This report recommends that a new service model for 0-19 years olds continues the Children's Centre model of assessing how many fathers its services reach so it can evaluate if father-inclusive practice is being effective. The report recommends that settings in a new service model record fathers and male carers attendance of CAF/TAC meetings and each setting supports male carers to access these. This would ensure more fathers are involved in decisions about the welfare of their children, they get to meet the relevant professionals and men are supported to be a resource rather than a risk to their families.

Social care

The author acknowledges an increase in father-inclusive practice by social workers since 2011 with good examples of individual workers increasing their use of father-inclusive practice in order to safeguard children. Social work is an effective 'gateway' for male carers to access support from other agencies included in C.P and C.I.N plans. Specialist workers are invited to core meetings to specifically support male carers, including Children's Centre workers, Health visitors, Housing officers, mental health workers, G.P's, probation workers, substance misuse workers etc. Social workers have increased their inclusion of Dads workers in Child Protection Plans and invited them to core meetings. In doing so vulnerable male carers who previously were disengaged and reluctant to work with social care have been engaged and felt supported. Social workers have provided feedback that including Dads workers in plans has been effective in building trust with male carers and they are more likely to complete 1:1 work. This joint father-inclusive work is seen as a protective factor and has contributed to fathers stepping down from Child Protection Plans. The report found a significant increase in referrals by social workers to the Making Changes perpetrator programme. Social workers used this as a protective factor for children and partners from male carers with abusive behaviours and as a means to ensure men stepped down from Child Protection Plans. Social workers continue to make referrals for male carers to attend parenting programmes. The report found social workers prefer to refer fathers to programmes that are delivered in a father-inclusive manner. This would account for ongoing referrals to the successful Man Enough parenting programme.

The main action point social care managers agreed to at OCCs Sounding Board was to 'assign a senior manager to be a Dads Champion'. The report found individual social workers that have championed fathers work. This includes Mark Ginsburg who is a trained senior social worker for OCC and an OPF Fathers' Champion. He has actively championed fathers work and attended Fathers' Champion Network meetings before and after the period of the Sounding Board. He has confirmed that other senior managers have championed the need to commission the 'Caring Dads' perpetrator programme. He found no evidence of a senior manager in social care being appointed as a Fathers' Champion or such a person attending OPF Fathers' Champion Network meetings since the Sounding Board in 2011.

Due to the extent of male carer involvement in social care this report believes there is now scope for a senior social care manager to be nominated as a Fathers Champion. This would ensure successful father-inclusive actions by individual social workers become embedded into everyday practice. A nominated manager could champion the need for greater availability of father-inclusive interventions for male carers to ensure male carers can meet the requirements of the Child Protection Plan; champion the need for a perpetrator programme to be funded, with contributions from health and family services, so a protective factor to safeguard children from further abuse continues to be available in the county; look at current attendance figures of male carers being invited to C.I.N, C.P and L.A.C meetings and champion ways to increase this; invite practitioners such as Dads Workers to social worker team meetings in order to help create a dialogue around father-inclusive practice; examine case studies in this report that demonstrate how other social services have developed father-inclusive practice in order to bring about a

cultural shift in working with men and if necessary commission externally to achieve this; attend a new Dads forum with other service managers to implement the recommendations of this report.

OPF Fathers' Champion Network and father-inclusive parenting programmes

Full case studies in this report outline how OPF Fathers' Champion Network has met its action points to provide practitioner support and support the Man Enough parenting programme since 2011. This includes bi-monthly meetings for professionals working with men to develop their practice sharing; support for Dads workers to develop more dads groups and Saturdads sessions across the county; the development of the Oxondads website for workers to share information of their services for fathers; the organisation of seminars with national speakers to share UK best practice in fathers work; the delivery of the Fathers' Champion Fund to enable workers to deliver a series of father-inclusive activities; the funding of additional Man Enough parenting programmes and completion of a series of taster and full Man Enough programmes since 2011 at various Children's Centres and Hubs; and the publication of two report's on father-inclusive practice in Oxfordshire. Action For Children continue to commission Man Enough as an evidence based parenting intervention for fathers in its settings across Oxfordshire and OCC social workers continue to refer fathers to Man Enough as an effective intervention to meet the requirements of Child Protection Plans. OCC managers reversed the Sounding Board action point to commission Man Enough and have chosen to deliver other evidence based programmes. For these programmes to attract male participation they will need to be delivered to all male groups, by male facilitators or those trained in working with men and in evening times for fathers to access them. The 2014 Early Intervention Directory subsequently stated that evidence based parenting programmes needed to be delivered in a father-inclusive manner. The author recommends that OCC managers demonstrate they have consulted fathers who continue to attend the Man Enough programme and professionals who continue to refer men to it before deciding against commissioning it again.

The Fathers' Champions Network did not meet its action point to support all practitioners as it did not convince OCC early years strategic leads, members of the Children's partnership and OSCB, senior social care or health service managers to attend Fathers' Champion Network meetings or nominate a Fathers Champion who could help to develop father-inclusive practice in their services or Trusts.

A new consultation to implement OCC's new service model in 2017

In 2017 OCC will introduce a new family service model. A new fathers' consultation would provide an opportunity for the local authority to re-evaluate its capacity to meet its KPIs and the needs of fathers as a target group. As part of the launch of new services OCC may want to consider a new consultation to examine how the new service model will deliver a whole family approach, how its new workforce can deliver father-inclusive services, what training gaps exist and ways senior managers can buy into and champion fathers work. This process could offer agencies such as social care, health services and the Children's partnership and OSCB an opportunity to reflect on their progress with fathers since the previous 2011 Sounding Board and commit to championing fathers work for OCCs new 'integrated' service model for the whole family.

WORKING WITH YOUNG MEN



Spurgeons is one of the UK's leading children's charities, supporting children and their families. In 2012 it was commissioned to develop a work programme to address the needs of boys, young men and fathers in Oxfordshire and produce a report. OPF responded to some of the recommendations with a young fathers project.

Key findings

- ◆ The Spurgeons charity was commissioned to produce a report about young men in Oxfordshire. The report found service gaps for young fathers.
- ◆ Some recommendations made by the report have not yet been fully actioned.
- ◆ Spurgeons and the OSCB did deliver training in 'How to work with young men and boys'. Some additional materials were added to cover young fathers.
- ◆ The report recommends that the Children's Trust and the OSCB consider separate training in how to work with young boys and how to work with young fathers.
- ◆ OPF gained learning points about the difficulty of delivering short term projects with young fathers, the problems of identifying young fathers and the issue of multi-agency work.
- ◆ Evidence of successful work with young fathers by FNP can be shared with OCC commissioners.
- ◆ Health services are to be integrated into OCCs new family service model in 2017.

Background

In January 2012 the Spurgeons charity was commissioned by the Oxfordshire Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Partnership to develop,



coordinate and mainstream a comprehensive work programme to address the needs of boys, young men and young fathers. The project came to an end in August 2013. A full report with recommendations was accepted in September 2012 and followed up by some project work in 2013.

Findings of the report

The report included the following conclusions in relation to young fathers:

- Champions are required in all agencies/services to work with young men and young fathers.
- There is a need to agree core programmes for young men and fathers that should be widely and regularly run in Hubs and Children's Centres across the County with staff identified and trained to deliver them.
- Staff in Health, Children's Centres and Hubs need to be trained to work with young men and young dads.

The progress report

The progress report also includes many observations and recommendations about support services for young men and fathers. The Trust for the Study of Adolescence, now renamed Young People in Focus states that:

"Successful work with young fathers is not rocket science, it doesn't have to be 'innovative', in fact it's often not innovative, it's about listening to what they want."

What is most important for young fathers is being able to establish a trusting relationship with someone, in a comfortable environment, who has demonstrated an interest in them. The report cites the view of Young People in Focus that young fathers can find statutory services intimidating and that they are also averse to joining fathers' groups which include older fathers. They have *"a range of needs specific to their age and maturity which can often best be met by a more age-related approach."* They recommend that issues of sexual behaviour and parenthood are unlikely to be the most fruitful topics through which to establish effective dialogue and trust. Other shared interests such as sport or particular practical needs are more likely to attract young fathers in the first instance.

"As the presenting concerns of employment, education, contact with children, child protection or housing were addressed, then some gradually became more involved in fatherhood issues."

On the subject of Children's Centres, the report states that only a few Children's Centres have been really successful in developing a comprehensive and effective strategy for engaging with and providing information for fathers/young men. It suggests that while Early Years Professionals see the child's needs as paramount, "they tend to prioritise the mother's requirements" over the father's. The unforeseen result of this, the report says, is that fathers are tangibly excluded and lose the opportunity to learn about parenting relationships. The report looks at the question of whether it is essential to have dedicated fathers' workers. While it recognises that these have been beneficial in specific instances it states that "it would seem that there is less need for more dedicated workers and more for a change of culture and approach by all workers (whatever gender)". The crucial question for all staff involved in a young family, it recommends, must be:



"How can we ensure that the father is engaged, supported and enabled to take an appropriate and caring role, in the best interests of the child?"

The report examines the case for and against gender-specific approaches and says that there has been an assumption that boys and young men are less able to respond authentically in mixed groups, i.e. they prefer male only sessions. It suggests however that rather than male only groups, it is more important that the programmes themselves should "reflect the contrasting ways in which men respond to issues of intimacy, empathy and activity".

Training in working with young men and fathers is, the report argues, critical to successful outcomes. It refers to the multi-disciplinary training in 'Working with Young Men' developed by the HOST team and further developed by the OSCB Risky Behaviours Training group. Its multi-agency nature was especially useful and helped to create multi-professional networks for future working. The report also recommends that the training should be for both genders, thus challenging the presumption that young men and fathers should have dedicated male workers. It suggests that the one-day model of training could be offered as four shorter, possibly twilight, sessions focussing on a school or Children's Centre catchment area, so that local staff can learn and plan together.

The recommendation of the report included the following:

- There is a case for a Father's worker within maternity health services. However, more discussion is required because such dedicated posts have led to less inclusive approaches, and negates the need for all staff to focus on the function of the whole young family.
- It is proposed that the Authority add to Ofsted targets regarding engaging with (young) fathers in Children's Centres. Quarterly reviews and Annual Conversations with Children's

Centres would provide an ideal method by which practice could be monitored and outcomes for young fathers evaluated.

- For the 'Working with Young Men and Boys' training programme to be accredited by the Authority as a record for CPD. This should be rolled out to multi-agency groups across the county, ensuring that there is wide ranging penetration into key agencies including Hubs, Schools, Health Visiting and Midwifery, as well as the voluntary sector working with young men and fathers.
- The concept of a Champions/Steering group for work with young men and fathers should be pursued, possibly through a commission to OPF to take the Fathers' Champion's Network forward. For the Network to be effective it would need senior management commitment and leadership.

Action points taken following the final report's recommendations

The author feels unable to assess fully the level of action taken by the teenage strategy group since Spurgeons' 2012 recommendations without further input from OCC managers and Health managers. The report has not been able to gather this feedback in time. However, this report encourages OCC and Health managers to revisit the Spurgeons recommendations and take into consideration the following observations made by OPF about the specific points it raised:

- The author would like to acknowledge successful development work with young fathers since the Spurgeons recommendations. This includes the work of FNP who support male partners of young mothers and a teenage pregnancy strategy group in the north of the county that has regular meetings with Children's Centres, Hubs, Health visitors and Midwives to support young carers. The author considers this strategy group to be a good example of multi-agency practice which should be embedded into OCC's new family service model.
- This report is aware that OSCB successfully delivered a 'Working with Young Men and Boys' training programme and it continues to be available in 2016. This training provides very useful tools for early intervention for youth work, safeguarding and teenage pregnancy. This training is not as relevant in how to work with young men once they have become young fathers and OSCB may want to consider commissioning additional training in working with young fathers to fully meet the reports' recommendations - see *previous OPF recommendations*.
- The report found that work with young fathers still needs to be prioritised. For instance, OCC's Key Performance Indicator states fathers should be included in services as a target group, but this does not specifically refer to young fathers. The author is aware that at previous inspections of Children's Centres, Ofsted did not consider it necessary for settings to engage with young fathers as a target group, unless they met a certain threshold of need. It would be beneficial if Ofsted's new framework gave specific reference to targeting young fathers.
- The report is not aware of senior managers being nominated as Dads Champions within Oxfordshire Health or maternity health services or such Champions attending OPF Dads Champion Network meetings. The author acknowledges further discussions will need to take place with Primary Care, Midwifery and Oxford University Hospitals to establish the current situation of which Dads Champions exist in health services and support growth in this area.
- It would appear that the recommendation for settings to use a quarterly review process to evaluate their work with young fathers has not been met. It would be helpful if OCC adopted this practice in its new family service model.
- OPF was not commissioned to be a Champion/Steering group for young fathers work. To ensure embedding of young fathers work now occurs it would be beneficial if senior managers in family services, health services and Social care attended a newly proposed Fathers Forum to prioritise this area.

OPF's project work with young fathers, 2013

The report found evidence that a grant from the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group was provided to enable OPF's Fathers development worker, Conroy Harris to initiate outreach work with young fathers. A great deal of outreach and networking with relevant agencies such as the Family Nurse Partnership and the Probation Service identified young and vulnerable young fathers to engage into a support group.

Conroy developed a programme of sessions which included issues of sexual health and life-style, early child development and fatherhood, dealing with strong emotions and personal goal setting. The Participatory Video facilitator group

'InsightShare' was engaged to develop a video project which would provide skills for the young men and enable them to tell their stories as young men and fathers. 8 young fathers aged

17-22 were identified and contacted weekly in order to develop confidence and a relationship with the facilitator before the group was brought together. These were marginalised NEET young men with experiences including drug addiction, mental health, criminality and unemployment. Conroy believed the potential group members needed a suitable venue that was informal and neutral, not identified with any particular agency associated with supervision, compliance or control and set out to find a suitable venue and partners.

A further report by Spurgeons, 'Working with Dads and Fathers in Oxfordshire', provided a progress report on their project work with young fathers. OPF was consulted by the project about its work with young fathers and, towards the end of the project, worked with Spurgeons to try to set up a weekly drop-in for young fathers in East Oxford. In responding to the progress report, OPF drew attention to the needs of young fathers for both support in their parenting role and for information in relation to life-style and mental, physical and sexual health. The worker from Spurgeons, Justin Andrewes, then joined with Conroy to plan the programme for the Support Group at the Fusion Arts project in East Oxford. The plan was for the group to meet weekly at twilight time allowing those still at school or college to attend. The group sought to articulate the voice of young fathers, using social media as a means of mobilising the group and voicing concerns and issues with public services. At the start of 2013 a drop-in was organised on a weekly basis. Despite the existence of the core group of young fathers that Conroy had been working with, the drop-in failed to attract regular participation and by May he decided to close the group.

Next steps still needed to develop young fathers work

Following its project work with young fathers in Oxfordshire in 2013, OPF's Fathers' Champion Network group became aware of possible next steps:

Identifying young fathers and signposting them to OCC services

OCC does not hold any reliable data on how many young fathers exist in the county. This is reliant on information of new families being shared between agencies. Advice by The Fatherhood Institute states that family services are legally obliged to 'ask' who the carers of a child are when families present themselves to a setting. However, a mother is not obliged to 'provide' details of the father. This means mothers are often gatekeepers to fathers receiving any family information or support from family services. This is particular relevant for carers who are separated and the mother is the main carer. Additionally, health professionals are often the first point of contact for new families and have the task of gathering contact information of the family. It is therefore important that new families are encouraged to complete full details of both carers on 'blue slips' provided by health professionals and that early years workers attempt to contact both carers so that they can offer services to the whole family. The report found that health professionals are attempting to complete 'blue slips' with both carers details and early years workers are using



these details to contact fathers in order to promote a range of postnatal services for men such as baby massage for dads and PEEPLE and parenting skills programmes for dads. It would be useful if senior managers of both health and early years professionals reminded workers about the importance of identifying and signposting both new mothers and fathers to services and review the effectiveness of gathering contact details of the whole family. With the introduction of a new family service model strategic leads will need to ensure midwifery, health visitors, and early years professionals continue to identify young fathers and use live birth data and blue slip systems in order to integrate their services and offer support to the whole young family. Oxford Public Health confirmed they are developing a health lead for each new centre to monitor practices.

Family Nurse Partnership and OCC services supporting young fathers

The report found that the FNP play an important and critical role in supporting some of the most vulnerable young carers in the county. The FNP is commissioned by OCC to work with young mothers but also use evidence based resources to engage and support their male partners in order to improve the outcomes of babies. Partners are included in the delivery of FNP whenever this is possible, this is actively encouraged by the nurses. FNP confirmed that they currently share all 'non client' identifiable information with the local authority, OCC receive a monthly data report and OCC chair their Advisory Board and Annual Review.

There is evidence of effective local practice by FNP with young fathers who have engaged with the programme. Oxfordshire FNP provided details of 'frequency of visit reports'. This shows that the total number of clients (mothers) visited during Jan-Dec 2015 was 206 and the total number of clients with partners (fathers) involved in visits was 111. FNP also cited an example of including an expectant young father speaking on a film they have recently made. The report found examples of individual cases of FNP health visitors working successfully with Children's Centres, e.g North Abingdon Children's Centre, to signpost young fathers to OCC services. Unfortunately, further examples of father-inclusive practice by FNP were not available in time for this report to complete a full case study. The report therefore recommends that FNP shares further examples it has of father-inclusive practice directly with OCC managers who are responsible for commissioning the service.

The author believes there would be benefits to family outcomes if young fathers attending the FNP programme could also access early years services at the same time. OCC workers currently offer a range of post natal interventions for fathers such as Baby Massage for Dads, PEEPLE parenting/attachment sessions and 1:1 support from outreach and Dads workers. The report received feedback from a number of Children's Centre managers and Early years workers regarding their attempts to work with young fathers and separated young fathers. These professionals requested support to increase their reach and engagement of these carers. Oxfordshire FNP and Oxford Public Health have both suggested that further strategic discussions with OCC may need to take place leading up to the launch of OCC's new family services model in 2017 regarding data sharing protocols and how best to include the whole young family.

Note - Nationally, FNP has signed up to the '1001 Critical Days' manifesto which commits to joint working and sharing vital data. OCC managers may want to examine if FNP's national commitment to do this now enables Oxfordshire FNP to share data with OCC. It is important that young fathers with risky behaviours are signposted to OCC services by agencies to ensure serious safeguarding issues do not escalate and children are not put at risk.

The '1001 Critical Days' campaign calls for greater data information sharing by agencies:
"Maternity services, health visitors, social care and Children's Centres should work closely together to share vital data, ensuring those who need additional support receive help."

OCC's new integrated service model has the potential to support young fathers

OCC's new family service model in 2017 will aim to support targeted vulnerable children and young people from 0-19 years old. As this service will effectively merge early years and early intervention practices it has the potential to provide an integrated service for midwives, health visitors, early years and support workers to work together on the needs of young carers of children.

OCC Strategic leads have an opportunity to embed inclusive practices for young fathers if they ensure young men who may be receiving support prior to becoming fathers then go on to access early years services and health support immediately after becoming fathers. This may require multi-agency work with service already engaging vulnerable young men, for instance Youth Offending and Probation services. This would ensure vulnerable men do not disappear from services when they become fathers, or separate from the young mother after the birth.

OCC strategic leads have stated they are willing to take a look at lessons learnt and in the new service model services will be more integrated with health, including access to health services in centres. Managers believe interventions will be built on and capacity increased. OCC leads stated they are currently working with health at a strategic level to see how to fully integrate health and Children's services to ensure this will benefit all young carers.

Strategic leads may want to examine examples in this report of existing effective practices popular with older fathers that can be replicated in its new service model with younger fathers. For these practices to be effective with younger fathers they will need to be applied in the post natal period, to male only groups, by workers trained in working with young men and fathers and delivered in male friendly environments, at accessible times such as weekends and evenings. Sessions could include Baby massage and PEEPLE postnatal sessions for young fathers; young fathers stay and plays with lunches; First Aid training and Home Safety advice sessions for young fathers; young fathers day trips, to soft play, zoos, wildlife parks etc; expectant young fathers 'buddy up' sessions with young men already experienced in fatherhood; parenting skills programmes for young fathers aimed at babies and toddlers; 1:1 solution based support by workers trained in working with young men and fathers.

Integrating OCC and Health services to support all types of fathers.

During the research for this report the head of Oxford Public Health contributed to helpful discussions about different ways to take fathers work forward. This included ways health services can build on their current inclusion of all types of fathers and embed this into joint work with OCC. Oxford Public Health confirmed that strategic leaders from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and OCC are working together to develop a new model for integrated working in the new family service. They confirmed they would consider the report's recommendations and be open to reflecting on specific areas of work involving fathers and health services. Whilst this was not a final commitment these discussions covered the possibility to: nominate a Champion that can promote whole family approaches in health services; provide a senior leader to support a future forum to take the report's recommendations forward; look at ways that enable services to proactively share data about dads; examine FNP's national commitment to the '1001 Critical Days' campaign and its recommendations around working with the whole family; record when antenatal contacts with the family are set up when the dad is available; consider signing up to an OCC Fathers Charter; promote Health visitor meetings with fathers at weekend stay and play sessions as part of the offer to deliver core public health and the preventative agenda; facilitate Dads workers to attend Health staff meetings to share father-inclusive practices and the Dads Test audit toolkit.

Note - Oxford Public Health are one part of Health services which also includes Primary Care, Midwifery and Oxford University Hospitals. The author is aware that similar links with these bodies will need to be established in order to facilitate similar discussions about their work with fathers.

FATHERS WORK SEMINAR



OPF organised a free seminar in Oxford in November 2015 called 'Future-proofing fathers work'. This had a capacity audience of local practitioners and stakeholders. Keynote speeches were made by Seany O'Kane, an award winning fathers practitioner and Andrew Sandles from Bath & N.E.Somerset Council. Delegates were given the opportunity to include their own suggestions for future-proofing fathers work and these are included in the report's final recommendations.

Key findings

- ◆ The seminar was well attended by over 50 local practitioners, stakeholders and academics.
- ◆ Initial findings from this report were shared and various local practitioners gave presentations.
- ◆ A presentation by Bath & N.East Somerset Council demonstrated how strategic leads can champion fathers work and embed a whole family approach.
- ◆ OPF received very positive feedback about the seminar and Seany O'Kane's key note speech about his work with young & BME dads in London.
- ◆ Delegates were keen to have a voice in how to future-proof fathers work in Oxfordshire.
- ◆ Practitioners are keen to champion fathers work in their services but feel there needs to be a cultural shift in the way senior managers support them.
- ◆ The seminar would have benefited if strategic leads from social care, health and OCC had attended.

Background

OPF has a strong tradition of organising seminars in Oxfordshire on a series of family issues and using these events to offer practitioner support. OPF's Fathers' Champions Network group has consistently championed fathers work and it was felt local practitioners could benefit from accessing UK expertise at a fathers seminar.



There had been a previous attempt in 2014 to organise a seminar jointly with Working With Men called 'How to work with hard to reach dads', but this did not go ahead at the time due to a lack of interest from services.

In 2015, OPF felt another attempt was needed to engage with services around fathers work. At the same time OCC service managers announced its proposal to cut its budget for family services. This had led to workers feeling uncertainty about the future of service delivery and whether fathers work would be able to continue in a new family service model to be introduced in 2017.

OPF felt a seminar would provide a good opportunity to consult workers, service managers and strategic leads about how fathers work could continue in the county.

Next steps for Oxfordshire

- The 2015 seminar 'Future-proofing fathers work' was well attended by OCC workers, OCC Children's Centre managers and an OCC Area manager. It was a very successful in sharing learning. However, for this seminar to be completely successful it will require support from senior strategic leads to ensure learning is embedded into new practices.
- Although the seminar received a positive response from delegates, there is still a need for more champions to emerge from local practitioners and services who can action institutional change and reduce barriers to fathers.
- Although delegates were proactive in making recommendations for future-proofing fathers work these recommendations need to gain support from senior strategic leads in their services to be actioned.
- Delegates supported gender-differentiated work with men in Oxfordshire, but felt there were benefits of also offering services to both carers at the same time.
- Practitioners working with male carers feel a new service model in 2017 can develop a whole family approach if service managers 'buy into' embedding father-inclusive strategies into everyday practice.
- OPF's role for funding dads projects, organising fathers work, seminars and practitioner support has come to an end.
- Delegates feel there needs to be a new Dads forum for service managers to meet and take the lead on fathers work in the county.

Aims of the seminar

OPF's aims for organising the seminar included:

- To organise an event that could raise the profile of fathers work, the report's findings and OPF's fathers championing role.
- To invite practitioners, area managers and strategic leads from OCC, Social Care and Health services so they can hear about best practice in fathers work.
- To share the initial findings of this report with delegates and reflect what local practice has achieved so far.
- To provide a platform for local practitioners included in this report to present case studies of their own father-inclusive practice.
- To celebrate the success stories of local fathers work and emphasise the need to embed this practice into existing services so learning is not lost in a climate of austerity.
- To invite a neighbouring local authority to present work that demonstrates a whole family approach is achievable.
- To invite a leading UK fathers practitioner to present a key note speech to inspire local practitioners.
- To explain to stakeholders that OPF's role in fathers work is now coming to an end and alternative ways to champion this work need to be examined.
- To examine ways father-inclusive practice could be maintained by settings and services as part of a new proposed family service model in 2017.
- To offer a forum for delegates to provide their own recommendations for future proofing father-inclusive practice and include these in the final report.
- To facilitate practitioner networking, encourage joint working between local services and network with invited UK practitioners and academics to develop future joint work.
- To galvanise local practitioners into supporting, delivering and championing father-inclusive practice in their fields and encourage them to feedback to their senior managers whom may not have attended.



Seminar delegates

The seminar was attended by a capacity audience of 50 invited delegates and speakers. OPF worker Glen Scrivener provided each delegate with an info pack of father-inclusive practices and previous OPF reports on fathers work.

Delegates included a wide range of local and UK practitioners: Social workers, Solicitors, MASH safeguarding workers, Housing Association leads, Play Association leads, Family Group Conference workers, OCC Area manager, Domestic Abuse lead, Perpetrator programme lead, Parenting programme facilitators and leads, S.E.N and Autism workers, Children's Centre managers, Early Intervention Hub and family support workers, Fathers practitioners, PEEP postnatal facilitators, Homelessness, Floating support, Aspire, MIND mental health services, Oxford City Council project workers, Local Authority project managers, Young Fathers practitioner, Families Need Fathers representatives and male carers involved in the case studies.



Introductions and Chair

Chris Sewell formally opened the seminar on behalf of Oxfordshire Parenting Forum and gave a brief overview of OPF's role in championing fathers work and the upcoming publication of this report. The seminar was then Chaired by Professor Tina Miller of Oxford Brookes University and the ONEFAR network. Tina is a Professor of Sociology and her research and teaching interests include motherhood and fatherhood transitions, constructions of gender and identities, masculinities, reproductive health, narratives, qualitative research methods and ethics and she has published in these areas. She regularly participates in TV and radio programmes in relation to her research and publications on motherhood and fatherhood.



OPF Report findings

Martin Andrews, the Dads Support Worker at Grandpont Children's Centre and OPF researcher introduced to delegates his initial findings of his report, 'Future-proofing fathers work'. He then handed over to local practitioners involved in the report's case studies so they could present their work with fathers in more detail.



Local practitioner presentations

Please note: the following presentations are covered in more detail as case studies in section four of this report.

Jackie Nevin - A case study of Mental Wellbeing Workshops for male carers.

Jackie is a Family Group Conference and Restorative Justice practitioner and group facilitator. Jackie was recently commissioned by Grandpont Children Centre to co-design and deliver a series of pilot Wellbeing and Relationship workshops for male carers.



Lucinda Cave - A case study of PEEP postnatal services engaging male carers.

Cindy is an Early Years teacher, currently employed as a Children's Centre teacher, with particular interests in dads work, outdoor learning, childminders and 2 year olds. Cindy delivers PEEPLE baby sessions for Dads on behalf of Action for Children at South Abingdon Children's Centre.



Liz Jones - A case study of Making Changes perpetrator programme for men.

Liz Jones is the Domestic & Sexual Abuse Coordinator for Oxford City Council. Liz works with statutory and voluntary agencies to improve response and support for victims, children and offenders of interpersonal violence. She has also been a facilitator of Making Changes for 8 years.



Mark Ginsberg - A case study of the Man Enough parenting programme for male carers over the last 15 years.

As a father of two sons, Mark Ginsburg attended his first Man Enough dads course in 1999, after which he joined Oxfordshire Parenting Forum and set up their 'Think Dad' champions group. Mark then trained as a social worker and was appointed the first Fathers' Champion, supporting social workers covering the Oxford area. Mark has facilitated and set up Man Enough in the county since the death of its founder, Albert Ford. He has also run Saturdads at South Abingdon Children's Centre since 2009. In 2016 he is delivering 3 Man Enough programmes through Action for Children in Oxfordshire.



Rachel Gildea - A case study of Disco Dadz, a new approach to engaging fathers and their children through movement and dance.

Rachel Gildea is a freelance dance artist, educator and project manager, specialising in work with vulnerable young people, adults and male carers. She organised the year long Big Lottery funded Disco Dadz and project manages the sessions.



Martin Andrews - A case study of Saturdads, a model for working with both universal and hard to reach male carers.

Martin has been the the Dads Support Worker at Grandpont Children's Centre for the last 7 years. His work engaging male carers led to the centre reaching nearly half of all the dads with an under 5 year old living in the catchment. This was the highest in the county, over double the county average and 6 times higher than other centres. He continues to deliver 1:1 and group work with vulnerable male carers. His previous research for Oxfordshire Parenting Forum, '*From the Margins to the Mainstream*'; was a study of parenting programmes for fathers in Oxfordshire. He is a member of the House of Commons APPG on Fatherhood and an advisor to a new UK Fathers Foundation led by Working With Men.

Local Authority presentation

Please note: this campaign is covered in more detail in section three of this report.

Andrew Sandles - A year long local authority multi-agency campaign to raise the profile of fathers work.

Andrew is the Data Quality Performance Manager from Bath & North East Somerset Council and was the Project Co-ordinator for the 'Celebrating Fatherhood' campaign. Andrew described to delegates the learning points of this campaign for other local authorities seeking to include fathers in their services. He particularly focussed on the need to 'embed' father-inclusive practice within existing family services, such as social care, health services and schools. Although useful to have champions deliver gendered services for fathers, these need to be mainstreamed into everyday practice to ensure they become sustainable. The success of the campaign relied heavily on the 'buy in' of strategic leads and the local Safeguarding Board. He demonstrated outcomes achieved such as the fathers reading legacy. He stressed the need for local authorities to champion a 'whole family approach' to improve children's outcomes.



Housing Association presentation

Please note: this case study is covered in more detail in section four of this report.

Justin Andrewes - Sovereign Housing: empowering community responses to local needs and working with male carers from a housing association perspective.

Justin works within Sovereign Housing's Community Investment team, creating partnerships and working with groups that affect communities within neighbourhoods where Sovereign owns housing stock. He sees fathers work as an integral part of a holistic approach to building resilient and aspirational communities. This work involves funding upstream project work with fathers to ensure families have their needs met and can prosper. Delivery is through joint work with practitioners experienced in fathers work and through father-inclusive programs such as PEEPLE for dads and the Man Enough parenting programme. Justin was able to give practitioners an insight into how this different economic model and early intervention practice could enable them to be less reliant on local authority funding in a climate of cuts and austerity.



Key note speech

Please note: this practice is covered in more detail in section three of this report.

Seany O'Kane - National perspectives on fathers work

Seany is a multi-award winning practitioner, public speaker and recognised figure within the field of Fatherhood work in the UK. His research and literature have contributed to a growing interest in British empirical evidence focusing on the lives of young fathers. As the founding member of 'Lambeth Dads', he continues to create ground-breaking methods in father-inclusive practice that help to contribute to services excelling in father/family engagement. Seany delivered an inspirational talk to delegates. He demonstrated how 'out of the box' approaches are key to breaking down the barriers that fathers still face when accessing services nationally and locally. He stressed the need for practitioners to explore alternative ways of working with fathers at a time of austerity and cuts to local authority budgets.



Panel and Q & A section

Professor Tina Miller chaired a panel discussion with Seany O’Kane, Martin Andrews, Andrew Sandles and Justin Andrewes. Delegates posed questions about local issues, including: the lack of services available for separated fathers; the need for training for social workers to engage hard to reach fathers; the importance of greater joint work with young fathers between OCC early years services and health organisations; the importance of championing fathers work by social care and health service managers, OCC strategic leads and the Safeguarding Board.

Delegates’ discussion

Professor Tina Miller chaired an open discussion entitled ‘What and where next for fathers work in Oxfordshire?’ This discussion aimed to highlight four specific areas for action and commitment, dividing into topic groups to work out detail with agreement and commitment on key objectives for the survival of fathers work in the county. Delegates suggested 4 areas:

1. The future funding of services for male carers in a time of local authority cuts and austerity.
2. Integrated work between agencies to embed fathers work and share learning.
3. Being creative in approaches and be less restrained by local authority targets or practices.
4. Championing of fathers work at all levels and the break down institutional barriers through a cultural shift in beliefs and practices.

Delegates recommendations

Have more joined up working, share information and knowledge and an integrated service.

Use embedding approach of fathers work into existing services like other LAs have done.

Get funding from outside the county council for fathers work, e.g District, Town and Parish councils, Local family based companies, big dads employers like BMW, solicitors firms, Branson.

Build links with Oxford City Council and use Community centres for open access fathers work.

Create a directory of services for dads and registered trained practitioners in fathers work who can be commissioned by OCC.

Dads workers promote their work in social care and health team meetings, G.Ps and mental health services.

Offer training for OCC statutory services in father-inclusive practice.

Be creative and think outside the box rather than follow outdated practice.

Develop a social enterprise that can generate income for fathers work.

Present headline figures that show cost analysis of risk and benefits of fathers work and present to strategic leads and outside funders.

Find new funds for Oxondads and Social media.

Images of delegates



Feedback from delegates

"Outstanding seminar yesterday. Very proud to be part of the day. Well done. I was endeared by the immense passion clearly generated by the practitioners that carry out the work to fathers."

Seany O'Kane, Think Fathers

"I really enjoyed the fathers seminar. It has to be one of the best seminars I have attended. I have already given feedback to my manager about the event and the ways we can work better with dads "

Barb Crowther, OCC worker

"Well done for getting Andrew Sandles to present the fathers work by his LA and Safeguarding Board. It provided a great road map of how fathers work could be championed next in Oxfordshire."

OCC Dads worker

"I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the seminar. An inspiring collection of speakers which gave me a real insight into the important work you and others are championing in Oxfordshire. I can't help but mention Seany O'Kane who exuded passion for his work with Dads! Really well done to you and all others involved in highlighting the important role dads have in their children's lives."

Lizzie Troup, OPF

"I was really struck by how much excellent and varied work is going on and what an amazing piece of work Martin has done in pulling all this together in the report. It feels as though there is a good momentum and will to continue the work."

Kathy Peto, Family Links

"I thought it was a very good afternoon yesterday with lots of good speakers and food for thought. Well done to all who organised it."

Seminar delegate

PRACTITIONER TOP TIP:

'If a local authority wants to introduce a whole family approach it will need to look at what other UK authorities have already successfully achieved with men, examine their best practices and deliver evidence based programmes in a father-inclusive manner.'

OPF has worked with all the leading UK agencies that work with fathers, including Working With Men, Think Fathers, The Fatherhood Institute, Including Men and has links with key individuals in fatherhood such as Dr Gavin Swann, Professor Tina Miller, Roger Olley MBE, Seany O'Kane, Andrew Sandles and MP David Lammy, who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood. OPF organised a seminar to share this learning with practitioners in Oxfordshire. The next step would be for strategic leads in Oxfordshire, with the support of the Safeguarding Board, to reflect on their statutory duty to work with families to safeguard children and consider how future-proofing fathers work can help them improve outcomes for children. By taking on board local and national best practices with fathers, senior managers of services can demonstrate their commitment to championing fathers work and ensure Oxfordshire becomes known as a region of outstanding practice with male carers and their children.

PART FIVE - CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Way Forward for Oxfordshire: Two options

Whilst this report was being written, Oxfordshire County Council was going through the process of restructuring its children and family services. It had proposed that its 44 Children's Centres and 7 Early Intervention Hubs were to be replaced in March 2017 with a reduced number of Children and Family Centres created for the most vulnerable families in the greatest need. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the continuation of effective fathers work. This report found good examples of grassroots fathers work and a significant increase in fathers engaging and benefitting from services. It also found this inclusive work has failed to be embedded into everyday practice. Following recent discussions with OCC strategic leads responsible for the transformation of the new service model, OPF is aware that a range of new policies and strategies will be developed in the new service model to ensure whole family working and within that father-inclusive practice. There are two options to consider:

Option 1: "Commissioning"

This option is based on the belief that to develop a whole family approach there needs to be a change in culture and this can only be guaranteed by introducing external support. It believes strategic leads will need external organisations to provide short term training and support to help them embed practice in the longer term. Option 1 ensures change occurs as it supports internal strategic leads to champion change themselves and challenge any downstream institutional barriers that are resistant to change.

Gains

- The local authority are buying in best practice and experience. Examples are provided in the report by the Fatherhood Institute, Working With Men and Think Fathers, who as leading UK specialists in father-inclusive practice, have worked on behalf of local authorities to deliver change.
- Strategic leads get the initial direction and support they need to roll out change to senior managers. An example in the report is provided by Bath & North East Somerset Council, who in order to deliver a year long fathers campaign and make institutional changes, combined option 1 and 2 by commissioning The Fatherhood Institute and Bath University to oversee the initial process and then rolled out changes internally over the year.
- The buck stops with who is commissioned to do a particular job and progress is secured through effective contract management.
- The local authority get to pick and choose. Commissioning a social enterprise that is competent but also good value for money can be more cost effective than having to develop the work themselves.
- External organisations are likely to have the benefit of experience of delivering on this process previously and in other areas of the country.

Risks

- It may be more expensive to buy in expertise rather than use existing practitioners who are already working for the local authority who can work 'in house'.
- Using option 1 alone does not have the same potential for embedding change into institutional practice, as internal staff will feel the process of change does not belong to them and this becomes a short term fix rather than sustainable progress led by the workforce.
- Using option 1 alone means its difficult for external agencies to change internal practices and culture.

Option 2: “Embedding”

This option is based on the belief that services have a responsibility to mainstream best practice. It believes it can do this by examining UK research that demonstrates clear benefits to children and families when the whole family is included in services. This option believes that services need to use father-inclusive practices to engage male carers so that more of them can become a resource to their children and their partners and less of them remain a risk to their children and partners. It believes that only by embedding father-inclusive practice into its existing services will a whole family approach become sustainable and be delivered in everyday practice. It believes that champions need to be identified across services and change has to be led from the top with strategic leaders empowering champions at every level. Institutional barriers that resist change are removed through training and supervision of the workforce. Services examine local best practice and data, examine evidence based programmes which are effective with men, engage with this report's findings and recommendations, and translate this into local work with men. It believes Service managers can consult with OPF to take this work forward into the new service model in 2017.

Gains

- Embedding a whole family approach only requires an initial financial investment for training and support programmes so it is not an ongoing revenue requirement.
- It is a low cost option as it involves adapting existing services rather than financing new systems.
- Good practice becomes sustainable as it becomes part of custom and practice amongst operational staff and managers.
- Investment in staff leads to areas of growth and workers feel inspired, challenged and confident as they see the longer term benefits to families from their interventions.
- Including the whole family enables male carers to be the solution rather than the problem. This reduces the long term reliance of families on operational services and statutory services.
- As demonstrated through UK research and a case study of a comparative local authority (Bath & N.E Somerset Council), included in this report, embedding a whole family approach in services improves outcomes for families for the short, medium and long term.
- Local authorities get to meet their KPI of engaging male carers as a target group and by offering services to male carers they meet their current aims of increasing children's early attachments with their carers, early communication and language, children's school readiness, parental mental health and reducing children from escalating into social care.
- At a time of limited resources, having an embedded policy across everyday practice helps to integrate services and leads to more joint working in order to meet the needs of the whole family.
- In the longer term, there are not the demands on managers' time and capacity once practice has been embedded. In fact this may improve their time and capacity as they will be potentially spending less time supervising staff as family outcomes improve and family breakdown reduces.
- The risk of managers not 'buying into' embedding a whole family approach can be alleviated via the establishment of a support forum for champions to meet on a regular basis to discuss practice, any concerns and ways forward.
- Oxfordshire becomes a national example of good practice and safeguarding.

Risks

- Senior managers seeking to embed a whole family approach may need to maintain a championing role to ensure service managers 'buy into' ongoing changes that are required.

- Managers may become resistant to whole family approaches if they feel their capacity is limited by ongoing austerity measures.
- Managers seeking to embed a whole family approach will need to be aware of any pockets of practice that need additional support and supervision.
- The embedding process will require some initial financial investment for training and staff support.

OPF Fathers' Champions Network

Oxfordshire Parenting Forum's Fathers' Champions Network believes it is in the best interests of fathers, mothers and children that a local authority adopts a whole family approach. Having examined the national research, reflected on local practice and considered the 2 options, it would recommend:

- The local authority uses option 1 in the short term to commission external expertise to supervise and train internal managers prior to beginning option 2 to embed changes in everyday practice.
- The local authority uses option 1 in the short term to commission external specialist training for the workforce that internal expertise may not be able to provide themselves.
- The local authority then uses option 2 in the longer term to embed practice internally in a top down model, thus saving expense, ensuring senior managers are responsible for institutional change, creating internal best practice and ensuring this process becomes sustainable.

5.2 Top ten tips for future-proofing fathers work in Oxfordshire

1. External commissioning - Get the best to be the best! Commission UK trainers such as the Fatherhood Institute, Working With Men, Dr Gavin Swann and Seany O'Kane and Oxfordshire will gain from their years of investment and experience in fathers work. Local professionals will then be trained to deliver this work themselves in the longer term.

2. Strategic leads champion a whole family approach - A top down approach would ensure service managers 'buy into' embedding work with male carers into their everyday practice and integrate with other services.

3. Weekly open access and Saturdads sessions for dads - By offering open access sessions just for dads in the week and weekend, new Children and Family Centres would increase the service reach of male carers, provide venues for contact sessions and give hard to reach dads access to family support workers.

4. Children's services, social care and health services financially contribute to a perpetrator programme

- To meet its statutory duty to safeguard children, the local authority may need to provide financial support to retain a domestic violence perpetrator programme such as Making Changes or commission Caring Dads, which to signpost dads to. This is recommended by NICE.

5. Complete a Dads Test - Services that want to embed a whole family approach can start by completing a Dads Test of their settings. This would identify gaps and help the workforce to appreciate the benefits to families and children by including fathers. It would reduce institutional barriers and help develop a cultural shift in practices.

6. Do it together - Create a regular forum for collaborative work between OCC strategic leads, OSCB and nominated Dads Champions from social care and health services.

7. Parenting programmes delivered to the whole family - Evidence based programmes delivered in the evening to all male groups by facilitators trained in working with men means the whole family can access them. Easy win.

8. 1001 days campaign gets local support - If Oxfordshire family services, social care and health services want to show their support for this national campaign, they could work together to target local fathers earlier. This may include maintaining father-inclusive postnatal sessions such as baby massage and PEEPLE for dads. FNP has signed up nationally in support of the campaign's recommendations, which includes greater data sharing between services.

9. Learning through play - Promoting regular play days for dads in the community and schools helps children improve their learning outcomes and demonstrates dads are a positive resource to their families.

10. The Safeguarding Board champions the link between safeguarding and effective dads work - OSCB provide lots of useful safeguarding training to workers. To improve safeguarding practitioners will need training in how to work with fathers. A LSCB highlighted in this report convened a multi-agency group to support its local council to work with men. OSCB could consider doing this and add father-inclusive training and develop a Fathers' Charter to support services working with fathers.

5.3 TIMELINE OF FATHER-INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN OXFORDSHIRE 2007-2015

