
Putting father-inclusiveness into practice

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- **Why is it important for children's services to be more inclusive of fathers?**
 - **Trends in how children's services are delivered**
 - **How can Think Fathers and the Dad Test help?**
 - **What challenges do we now face?**

Fatherhood is changing

Higher involvement: UK fathers carry out 25% of childcare related activities during the week, and one-third at weekends. More where both parents work full-time (*EOC 2003*)

Broader expectations: 70% of men & women want fathers to be more involved (*Twenty-first Century Dad; EOC 2006*). 58% of men and 62% of women reject the male breadwinner role (*Dads and their babies; EOC 2005*)

LONG TERM IMPACT OF FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Children with highly involved fathers tend to have:

- better friendships with better-adjusted children
- fewer behaviour problems
- lower criminality and substance abuse
- higher educational achievement
- greater capacity for empathy
- higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction

(for reviews see Flouri 2005; Pleck and Masciadrelli 2004)

This is true whether or not parents live together,
and for both biological and step fathers

Fathers affect mother – child relationships

Fathers' support for breastfeeding has strong influence on the initiation and duration of breastfeeding (Swanson & Power, 2005); particularly in low-income families (Schmidt & Sigman-Grant, 2000)

Negative fathering affects children

Conflict with father, and fathers' harsh or neglectful parenting are strongly associated with behaviour problems in children (studies cited by Phares 1999; Flouri 2005)

Fathers as resources where children are vulnerable or at risk

A positive father-child relationship promotes resilience and recovery from trauma and abuse, when fathers or father-figures are satisfied with parenting, provide financial support and engage in nurturant play (eg if mother has PND, maternal drug abuse) (Tunnard 2002, 2004)

Father inclusiveness in Government policy & legislation

- **Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need & their Families** (DH 2000)
 - **Childcare Act** (2006)
 - **Equality Act** (2006)
 - **Maternity Matters** (DH 2007)
 - **Children's Centre Practice Guidance** (DfES 2006) & **Planning and Performance Management Guidance** (DfES 2007)
 - **Every Parent Matters** (HM Treasury 2007)
 - **Aiming High for Children** (HM Treasury/DfES 2007)
 - **Teenage Parenting Strategy & Guidance** (DCSF 2007; 2008)
 - **The Children's Plan** (DCSF 2007)
 - **2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy** (DCSF 2008)
- Healthy lives, brighter futures: the strategy for children and young people's health** (DCSF/DH 2009)

“A Review of How Fathers can be Better Recognised and Supported Through DCSF Policy” (DCSF 2008)

FINDING: Children’s services’ implementation of father-inclusive policies is patchy.



- DCSF-initiated campaign now led by Fatherhood Institute - key information hub for policy and practice development
- Three overall goals:
 1. **Father-inclusive children's services** - which systematically engage with fathers and support father-child and parental relationships
 2. **Father-inclusive approaches at work** - e.g. flexible working and leave arrangements which take account of fathers' roles in bringing up children
 3. **Public understanding and debate** about fatherhood and the importance of fathers' positive involvement in their children's lives.



- **Think Fathers Guide** - practical know how for services
- **Think Fathers Champions** - services, policymakers, employers etc who are committed to supporting father-child relationships
- **Dad Test** - self assessment framework, to be launched in October after consultation with Champions
- **Big Fatherhood Debate** - online debate about modern fatherhood
- **To register as a Champion** – email thinkfathers@fatherhoodinstitute.org



The Six Dad Test Commitments

- Leadership
- Team
- Environment
- Marketing and communication
- Recruiting fathers
- Monitoring and evaluation

Father-inclusive local services: Hull Teenage Pregnancy Support Service

staffing:

- **all staff responsible** for working with young dads - recruitment, induction, training, supervision reflect this
- **systems:** routine, practical registration & assessment of young dads and mums (including CAF); targeted literature
- **effective partnerships:** eg with Connexions, housing, Relate
- **integrated services:** structured 18-week ante-natal programme addresses fathers' role throughout
- **monitoring:** referral, assessment and support of young dads carefully scrutinised
- **consultation:** with young dads and mums

Hit The Ground Crawling

What is it?

- Small groups of expectant fathers meet 2 or 3 fathers who have recently had babies (with the babies)
- Trained facilitator, loose agenda
- Opportunity for expectant dads to discuss thoughts / concerns with other fathers, and see practical baby care by fathers in action

Why does it work?

- Best time to engage dads is around the birth, when most open to information and support
- Most fathers are in contact with maternity services in ante-natal period
- Fathers gain greatly in confidence and skill when they learn alongside – and from - other fathers
- Most men prefer informal services which they feel in control of
- Simple and cheap

Works best if mums engaged in intervention too

Challenges for local services and national policy

- **National:** further policy development, eg:
 - paternity/parental leave, flexible working
 - joining up safeguarding, domestic violence and father-inclusive agendas
- **National:** stronger infrastructure for workforce and practice development
- **Local:** robust strategies and effective services



Please register as a Champion:

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