



Father-Inclusive Parenting Services

Commissioning, Planning and Delivery

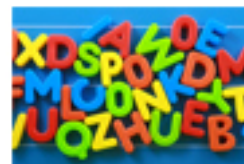
June 2009





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1. Introduction

Why this guidance?

The Kent Children's Trust - Strategy for Supporting Parents makes a clear commitment to providing services that promote the role of fathers and other male role models in caring for children. This includes:

- ensuring services are appropriate to fathers' needs
- ensuring services promote the inclusion of the father in children's lives

This is supported by a range of national policies and initiatives, including:

- Every Parent Matters
- Think Fathers, and
- Think Family.

See www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/parents for additional information.

It should be read in conjunction with the overall Supporting Parents Strategy and the Children and Young People's plan. This summary action plan should be adopted by all services implementing the Strategy, including any frameworks for evaluation and impact assessment against Every Child Matters outcomes.

Kent Children's Trust is a partnership group made up of representatives from social care, health, the police, voluntary sector, education, districts and other services, and aims to improve outcomes for all children by redesigning services and making sure all services across Kent work together.

This guidance has been written by the Fatherhood Institute, the UK's fatherhood think-tank, in partnership with Extended Services.

Who is it aimed at?

This guidance is aimed at commissioners, strategic and operational managers, and frontline staff in the statutory and voluntary sectors and sets out a framework for supporting father-child relationships in Kent. It contains guidance for all agencies working with children and their families, including those who work solely with adults who may need to consider the "fathering" role of an adult.

Further information

For further information and advice about this guidance, please contact: Jo Hook, Extended Services Lead Manager (Supporting Parents).

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To access a copy of the Supporting Parents Strategy, the parents' version or the Parents' charter see:

http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/Community/com_sch_ext_parenting_strategy.cfm



See Appendix 1 for further information on the Fatherhood Institute.



2. What we aim to achieve

Summary

Services need to engage with fathers and be inclusive, responsive, and respectful of their individual needs. Services should involve fathers in shaping services, support their staff appropriately and monitor the outcomes.

We must engage with fathers because they are important to their children. Whatever dads do, matters to their children. To achieve this, strategies and services need to be gender aware rather than gender neutral, and be responsive to the individual needs and experiences of different fathers.

Kent Children's Trust's vision is for successful communities, where "achievement exceeds aspiration, diversity is valued and every child, family, mother, father and carer is supported. Mothers, fathers and carers are positive about their own and their children's futures and are able to be effective in ensuring that their children have every opportunity".

This vision is firmly inclusive of fathers. All agencies and individuals in Kent working with families need to be father inclusive - which means that they are committed to improving children's welfare by systematically and routinely promoting positive relationships between fathers and children. Agencies should also support consistency in parenting between fathers and mothers, whether living together or not. This is in line with Children's Minister Beverley Hughes' call for local services to think distinctively about fathers rather than treating them as the 'invisible parent': "Let's make sure we 'think fathers' in every service we deliver and every policy we unveil."

Kent Children's Trust is developing a strategic and joined-up approach to meeting the needs of all parents, including fathers. The Kent Children and Young Peoples plan has identified working with fathers in its top eight priorities:

Priority 3

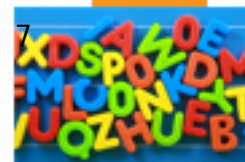
To improve parenting by implementing Every Parent Matters and developing more effective multi-agency support and early intervention for families experiencing problems.

To include:

- taking action to increase a father's involvement in their child's upbringing.

This requires an appropriate range of universal and targeted family services to meet the diverse needs of local families and communities, delivered at the earliest practical point to prevent crisis, and working in partnership with Adult Services.

All local children's and maternity services should draw on the best available research on what is effective at supporting father-child relationships, and therefore will be expected to:



- **engage systematically with fathers:** all services for families should “engage with both father and mother” [see DCSF’s *Children’s Plan*, Box 1.1], and work together to offer fathers an integrated and comprehensive range of services.
- **be inclusive:** “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”. [*Every Parent Matters*, Para 3.11]. This means that all services should be accessible to all fathers, whatever their background and family situation.
- **be responsive:** all services should be sensitive to the individual needs and experiences of fathers.
- **be respectful:** all services should value and respect individual fathers’ views, beliefs, strengths, knowledge and concerns about their children.
- **involve fathers as partners** in the design, delivery, evaluation and development of all their services.
- **support staff to be father inclusive.** All staff will be supported to develop the skills, knowledge and values necessary to work effectively with fathers, through appropriate recruitment, training, information and supervision.
- **regularly review** how effective all their services are at engaging with and supporting fathers.

This father-inclusive vision should be explicitly adopted by all local agencies, following active consultation and discussion with all staff, managers (at all levels), service users, partner agencies and community groups. Once adopted, agencies should ensure that the vision is publicised effectively in all their literature and displayed in all their settings. A lead officer responsible for implementing this vision should be identified in all agencies.

We recognise that this involves a substantial change in what is expected of local service providers. We will review on an ongoing basis how effective these strategies are at engaging with and supporting fathers, and offer appropriate support.

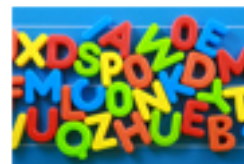
Consulting stakeholders about your father-inclusive vision

Do...

- explore staff attitudes / beliefs about fatherhood
- talk to local mothers and fathers who do not currently use services, as well as those who do
- analyse how supporting father-child relationships helps your existing goals, and build this into your vision statement
- develop clear, specific objectives concerning father-child relationships. Think about which dads you want to support, and why
- identify a lead officer for fatherhood in your agency
- establish a regular ‘fatherhood reference group’, jointly with other local agencies, for peer support, exploring practice issues and influencing strategic development.

Don’t...

- assume all staff have the same understanding and commitment about fathers
- settle for less commitment to fathers than to mothers.



3. What do we know about fathers?

“The bond between children and their parents is the most critical influence on a child’s life, and parenting strongly influences educational attainment, behaviour and mental health.”

Green Paper – Parental Separation: Children’s Needs and Parents’ Responsibilities, July 2004.

Summary

There is a strong national policy framework – including statutory duties – requiring local children’s services to be systematic in engaging with fathers and supporting their relationships with their children. This is because there is clear evidence both that fathers are an important influence on outcomes for children (especially in disadvantaged families), and that positive fathering benefits mothers too. Services can make a substantial difference to fathers’ behaviour, attitudes and confidence as parents.

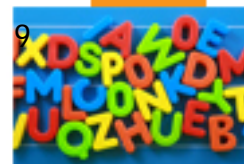
The evidence now shows clearly that fathers are an important influence on children’s wellbeing¹. It is also clear that the way services engage with fathers impacts on their behaviour, attitudes and confidence as parents: and that in turn affects children, mothers, and fathers themselves. This research underpins the current strong national policy framework requiring local authorities to adopt a strategic and joined-up approach to engaging with fathers and supporting their relationships with their children.

Fathers influence through:

- their direct relationship with each child
- the time, money and skills they bring to the child’s environment
- the support they give to mothers or other primary carers where their role is not that of primary carer
- their relationship with other important people in the child’s life
- their networks of family and friends.

Today’s dads do eight times more caretaking of infants and very young children than fathers did 30 years ago (now an average of 2 hours on a weekday in the UK). When both parents work, dads do a third of the parental childcare. Involved, ‘good enough’ fathering (like ‘good enough’ mothering) helps children develop better friendships; fewer behavioural problems; better educational outcomes; greater empathy; higher self-esteem and life-satisfaction; lower criminality and substance abuse; less traditional attitudes to earning and childcare; and greater resilience after parental separation. This is true for resident and non-resident fathers.

¹ For a comprehensive summary, see ‘The Costs & Benefits of Active Fatherhood’, available to download at www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&clD=586



In families where mothers are the primary carers, positive fathering can benefit mothers too. It is associated with mothers being less stressed and depressed, and bonding better with their children. Conversely, a negative (or lacking) father-child relationship is associated with less positive outcomes for all.

It follows that it is important to identify and engage with all fathers. But it is also true that children in disadvantaged families feel the effects of the quality of paternal relationships more acutely. In other words they tend to suffer significantly poorer outcomes when they have a poor relationship with their father; and significantly better outcomes when that relationship is substantial and positive.

There is also good evidence that services which engage well with fathers make a substantial difference to outcomes for children, mothers and fathers themselves. When fathers engage with services, they are likely to:

- feel more confident as fathers
- understand more about child development
- spend more time with their children
- be more sensitive and positive with their children
- be more supportive of their children's education
- feel less isolated.

For example, delivering a parent education programme to both parents is significantly more effective than delivering it to just one. Both parents' sensitivity towards their child is enhanced when both parents are worked with rather than only one.

Including fathers is also required by the Gender Equality Duty, effective from 6 April 2007. This statutory duty requires all public authorities, including those commissioning parenting services, to have "due regard" to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women². Gender equality does not require men and women to receive the same service - there are circumstances where needs are different. But gender equality does mean that neither women nor men should be excluded from support they need.

What influences whether fathers engage with local children's services?

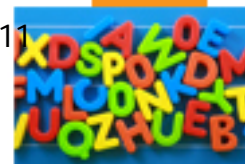
Like mothers, fathers are particularly open to engaging with services at certain life stages, notably in the ante and postnatal period. Fathers at other stages in the family life-cycle also express interest and enthusiasm, e.g. at parents' evenings. Fathers who are addressed in workplace settings, imprisoned fathers; fathers of children with disabilities, young fathers, and fathers of young children may be more readily engaged.

When engagement with fathers is not successful, it does not follow that fathers do not want a service. There are many possible reasons for their non-engagement, including:

² See Appendix 3 for more information.



- **father-specific factors:** their sense of identity as fathers, their knowledge about the importance of their role, their knowledge of local services and beliefs about whether they will be welcoming for fathers, cultural factors, and public attitudes
- **factors common to all parents:** their relationship with own father / mother, their mental and physical health, their employment status, involvement in criminality / drugs / alcohol, or domestic violence
- **couple-relationship factors:** relationship commitment and cooperation, mutual support, residence / contact / financial arrangements (where parents live apart)
- **mother-specific factors:** her employment, attitude towards and expectations of the father, support provided to father
- **child-factors:** attitude towards father; behavioural difficulties, temperament, age, gender, developmental status
- **larger contextual factors:** how services are delivered (e.g. opening hours, venue, working practices), employment factors (including whether long absences from home are required), economic factors, race / ethnicity resources and challenges, cultural expectations and social support.



4. Engaging with fathers

Summary

Effective pathways into all family services for fathers and expectant fathers are essential to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes. This requires routine and systematic recording of information about fathers and routinely asking for the father's contact details.

All family services should actively encourage signposting of fathers from other local agencies (including both adult and children's services) and develop signposting procedures for fathers, especially those in vulnerable families.

All home visiting and outreach services offered by family services should be organised to be accessible to fathers, and used routinely to engage with them.

All literature about your services (for service users and other agencies) should directly address and appeal to men. It should explicitly state that your services are for fathers as well as mothers.

Systematic engagement with fathers (including expectant fathers) is essential to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes. Effective pathways for fathers to engage with all family services are therefore a core element of good practice.

Effective engagement with fathers depends on identifying both the bridges and barriers to them getting involved in your services. If you are not currently in contact with many fathers, this does not mean that they are not interested. They may be unaware of your services, or think they are aimed at mothers, or do not understand why getting involved might benefit their children. You need to overcome these barriers, and construct effective 'bridges' to all fathers.

1. Referrals and record-keeping

Service providers cannot systematically engage with fathers unless they have their contact details. All maternity and children's services should routinely and systematically seek to record information about fathers and other significant carers in all the families they come into contact with - through referral, self-referral or outreach. This applies to all fathers, whether or not the father is currently resident or in contact with his children, and whether or not they have Parental Responsibility.

All referral and registration forms should therefore provide spaces for the name, and contact details of the 'mother', the 'father', and other key carers. These forms should also contain spaces to record other relevant information about fathers (as well as mothers). All staff with responsibility for filling in these forms should ensure that they routinely seek to gather and record information about fathers. When an agency receives a referral that does not contain information about the birth father and key father figures, this should be routinely questioned with the referring agency: to acquire the information (if known), or to agree which agency will gather the information. The use of



both registration and referral forms should be monitored by all agencies to ensure that this information is being gathered effectively. Model registration and referral forms are available at Appendix 2.

Where an agency is in contact with the father, agencies should gather contact information directly from him. Agencies often underestimate how many fathers already 'touch' their service - in person, or by phone or email - and a systematic approach will enable them to identify and connect more effectively. When gathering this information, all staff should be clear about what information is relevant and necessary. Agencies should explain clearly why information is being requested and how it will be used, together with a clear explanation of the agencies' Confidentiality Policy. A mobile phone number and email address may be all that is necessary.

More often than not the first contact your agency and other family services will have with a family will be with the mother. In these circumstances, you should routinely ask the mother for the father's contact details, and explain that you want these because he is an important person in the child's life.

She did it...

One home-school link worker got her service to redesign their registration form - several times! First they made spaces for 'parent one' and 'parent two'. Later they changed this simply to 'parent' and 'parent'. Then they decided on three sections: for 'mother', 'father' and 'other carers'.

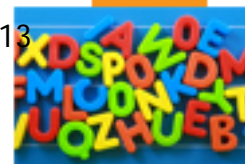
2. Signposting and 'Consent to Contact'

All family services should be actively signposting fathers to and from other local agencies (including both adult and children's services): e.g. from antenatal services, schools, Connexions, homelessness projects / hostels, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, GPs and local employers. Adult services should already be taking account of the needs of their service users as fathers (and mothers) when delivering services and assessing needs³.

All family services should develop their own 'Consent to Contact' form, and encourage other local agencies to use it routinely as part of their sign-posting procedures for fathers, especially those in vulnerable families. 'Consent to Contact' forms are filled in and signed by a service user at one agency, which then forwards them to a second agency - which is thus authorised to get in touch with the person in question. The forms include a summary of what services the second agency offers. For this approach to work, you will need to remind sign-posting agencies regularly about the 'Consent to Contact' forms and procedure⁴.

³ This is in line with the guidelines in "Reaching Out: Think Families" report (2008), available to download: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk/reaching_out_summary.aspx. The Government wants to extend the joined-up working, information sharing etc embodied in the Every Child Matters approach, to the whole family - so that adults' and children's services work together to tackle the root causes of children's disadvantage that often lay in the difficulties of their parents.

⁴ The 'Consent to Contact' approach was developed by Wellington and Meredith Children's Centres, Ipswich. A Model forms is in the appendix and they are also available to download from: www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/uploads/publications/328.doc



3. Publicity, outreach and home visiting

Fathers tend to be much less well informed about local family services than mothers, and assume that they are 'not for them'. All workers / volunteers in family services should take responsibility for routinely telling fathers what you offer, and encouraging them to attend your services. They should also encourage mothers to invite fathers to engage with your services.

All literature about your services (for service users and other agencies) should directly address and appeal to men. It should explicitly state that your services are for fathers as well as mothers. All leaflets / newsletters about services for families should include male images and the word 'dad' or 'father', emphasise why fathers are important and that they are welcome, and how your services can make a difference to their children. All workers / volunteers in family services, and other local agencies in contact with men, should have access to a good supply of leaflets about all local family services, and routinely give them to all fathers and mothers they are in contact with.

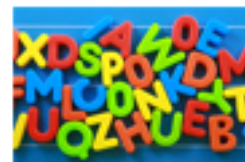
In order to reach fathers, especially those in excluded and vulnerable families, it is crucial to reach out to them, and not wait for them to come to you! Outreach can be a very effective and non-stigmatising way of connecting with fathers, by raising awareness of services, and encouraging everyone in local families to engage with them.

All home visiting services offered by family services should be organised to be accessible to fathers, and used routinely to engage with them. That means that home visits need to be offered at times that fathers can make, and that invitations should explicitly include fathers. At home visits, workers should proactively engage with fathers who are present - explaining that the service is for them as well as the mother. If the father is not present, the worker should discuss with the mother how to arrange future visits to encourage him to be present. These home visiting services should also routinely seek to engage with non-resident fathers.

Effective publicity and outreach to fathers

Do...

- proactively contact fathers directly, or through other agencies / events that men attend. For example, run lunchtime sessions at local employers on rights / roles for new dads; encourage the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) to run dad-relevant sessions on child support; suggest men's health sessions at local barbers; offer free family photo sessions for dads and children with local photographers, with a worker attending; get a worker to recruit dads at Jobcentre Plus
- run an ongoing series of events that highlight dads (e.g. monthly bring dad to school / nursery day; a trip out - take photos, then create a 'memory book' with dads and kids), and run activities (e.g. martial arts) designed to appeal to men. Think how to 'sell' these events to local mums (e.g. session where dads and children make a mother's day card; 'pamper sessions' for mums while dads take

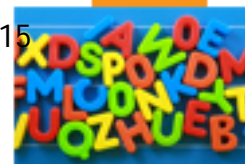


children swimming); and how to reach fathers through their children (e.g. put on activities for children - and get them to invite their dads)

- regularly use face-to-face recruitment with individual dads (e.g. approach in school / local playgrounds with survey)
- invite fathers to help you - e.g. run an allotment, cook, DIY, music session. Identify and build on their skills
- involve male service users in designing and implementing outreach and publicity strategies. Use dads to recruit other dads
- think about how to reach more marginal fathers, e.g. recruit non-resident dads via fast food restaurants, local park at the weekend, family lawyers, contact centres
- market your services through local media that men use. Consider launching your services for fathers with a local / national celebrity; running local 'debates' about fatherhood with celebrity speakers; publicising a men's health day etc.

Don't...

- assume dads aren't motivated as parents when they do not come along to your services
- rely on fathers contacting you simply after reading a leaflet - most fathers will only do so if this is combined with face-to-face contact with someone who facilitates their engagement with your service
- underestimate how much time and effort recruitment takes, or leave it up to one worker



5. Inclusive, responsive, respectful services

Summary

Local children's services should systematically and routinely offer all fathers and fathers-to-be the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively, whatever their circumstances, and take account of their specific needs and concerns. They should also routinely engage with mothers on fatherhood issues. Agencies should not see their engagement with fathers as problem-focussed, but should pay particular attention to designing services relevant to fathers whose children may be at risk of poor outcomes, and fathers at key transition points. The following services should be designed in ways which include fathers: antenatal, postnatal and early years, information, advice and advocacy, parenting skills, learning opportunities, informal support networks and personal/therapeutic support.

All agencies should ensure that the settings in which they deliver services do not alienate fathers. It will often be useful to engage local fathers in designing and building / adapting the physical spaces used to offer services.

Some separate services for fathers should also be available, but it will not be practical or effective to set up substantial parallel services for men and women, and there are many benefits to both sexes using the same services.

1. Core features

All children's services should:

- respond to individual fathers' complex and changing needs
- involve a mixture of universal and male-targeted services to meet fathers' different needs, circumstances and preferences
- be developed with different types of fathers in mind in order to engage effectively with fathers' diversity
- aim to promote positive parenting by men
- be positive and non-stigmatising
- have an active partnership with local fathers. This means involving fathers throughout in the design and delivery of all your services.

Which fathers to target

Services should attempt to engage routinely with all fathers in families they are in contact with. This includes both resident and non-resident fathers, and those with or without Parental Responsibility. Services should not see their engagement with fathers as problem-focussed.

Agencies should pay particular attention to designing services relevant to:

- fathers whose children may be at risk of poor outcomes, including disabled children and the children of disabled parents, children whose fathers and/or



mothers are teenagers, children from black and minority ethnic communities, children whose parents are asylum seekers, are separated, are disabled, have mental health or substance misuse problems, or use violence in their families or in the community, are or have been in prison or are known to be engaged in criminal activity; or who live in poverty or in workless households.

- **fathers at key transition points.** These include pregnancy and birth, children starting/changing school or becoming teenagers, parental separation, becoming a step-father, changing/losing employment, resettlement into the community after a significant absence - e.g. from prison, the armed forces.

“We work with YOTS, pupil referring units, and so on - we do preparatory work around becoming a responsible father and if they are already fathers we do the work around developing relationships with the child and the child’s other parent. There is merit in doing it that way, rather than in simply providing a ‘service for fathers.’ If that’s your only focus, then you aren’t approaching fathers until there is a problem”.

Melvyn Davis, Founder, Coram Boys2Men Project.

The following subsections summarise the core approaches required in the main service sectors.

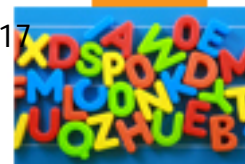
Antenatal

- Maternity services should engage with dads-to-be throughout, and act as a crucial link to postnatal services
- Information should be provided routinely to fathers and designed with their role in mind: about the health needs of baby, mother and father (e.g. smoking; breastfeeding, post natal depression, events / leaflets aimed at fathers / couples; men’s health)
- Routine assessment of fathers’ social/emotional needs (e.g. risks of depression; relationship issues) should take place
- Group-based and individual / couple support should be available to increase fathers’ competence and confidence as parents and partners.

Postnatal and early years

- Child-health services should routinely welcome fathers and be offered at times dads can attend
- Information / advice sessions, and informal groups for new dads or couples, should be offered
- Regular opportunities should be available for fathers and children to do activities together
- There should be well-equipped, ‘neutral’ spaces for non-resident dads to spend time with their children.

Information, advice and advocacy



- All printed/online resources sensitive to male experiences, identities, communication styles, information needs.
- Advice and advocacy should be accessible to fathers, on any issues impacting on their parenting capacity, including money management, their own health and wellbeing (physical and mental, substance use); post separation support (child support, legal issues, parenting); childcare provision; the education system; employment (rights, opportunities, training); benefits, including housing.

Parenting skills

- All parenting courses should explicitly examine and value the roles of fathers, their experiences and expectations, and help mothers and fathers develop cooperative parenting
- Male-only, female-only and mixed sessions / courses should be developed, with separated dads and father-figures both actively encouraged to attend (if necessary at different times from mothers). Family-therapy and behaviour change interventions should be intolerant of lack of participation by fathers, whether resident or non-resident. When mothers are unwilling / unable to attend, particular effort should be made to engage fathers and father-figures
- Co-facilitation by a man and woman can be particularly effective.

Learning opportunities

- Courses should be generally available and marketed to men and women, and cover subjects men find appealing and useful: basic skills; computer skills; training for work; including English as an Additional Language where relevant
- Some courses should be linked to family learning (e.g. dads learning to read, and also reading with their children)
- Courses should offer financial support to attend where there is genuine hardship.

Informal support networks

- Recreational activities for men as men (not as dads) should be offered.
- Fathers should be encouraged to form and make use of their own support or recreation networks.

Personal/therapeutic support

- Counselling; stress/anger management; mediation should be accessible to fathers
- Agencies should consider developing telephone or email services, which many men find comfortable to use - e.g. a postnatal depression helpline, linked to a face-to-face support option.

In all these services, there should be a range of activities e.g. gardening or other construction, DIY, swimming, cycling or other sports; music, photography or computers. This is important as a way of offering fathers something that is within their "comfort zone".



Women-only services

- A minority of specific services for mothers can be delivered more effectively in single-sex groups
- These services should still hold fathers in mind when working with the mothers, and signpost or refer fathers to other services accessible for them - which can if appropriate assess fathers' needs and parenting capacity
- Mothers should be kept well-informed about services that are accessible for dads.

2. Service settings

All agencies should ensure that the settings in which they deliver services do not alienate fathers:

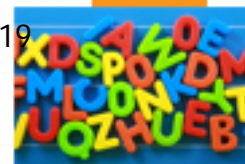
- décor should not be clearly 'feminine' in style
- baby-changing facilities should be easily accessible for dads, and signposted in such a way that they know they're allowed to use them
- there should be a male toilet marked (or, if there is only one, it should be clearly marked for use by both sexes)
- leaflets and notices which use positive images of fathers and children should be clearly displayed, as well as reading materials that take male needs and interests into account
- children's books about dads and children should be available
- unisex toys that are suitable for both girls and boys should be available to enable fathers and male carers to share experiences with their children
- consideration should be given to providing a specific dad-identified space where fathers can congregate.

It will often make sense to deliver some services aimed at fathers in other local venues / agencies that men may feel more comfortable in: schools, colleges, sports facilities and swimming pools, playgrounds and parks, community centres and other halls, youth clubs, shopping malls, pubs, local hotels etc. Outdoor events and trips away can also help get round the issue of creating male inclusive settings, and be a great source of fun and togetherness.

It will often be useful to engage local fathers in designing and building / adapting the physical spaces used to offer services. You should encourage local dads, mums and children to help you adapt your settings, including providing photos of dads with children.

Father-inclusive signage

- Do not use the word 'parents' unless you have to: try to use 'dads and mums' or 'mothers and fathers'
- If you have only female staff, don't put up prominent group photographs
- Look at your notice boards or leaflet displays - in the entrance particularly. Are any items specifically relating to fathers? Do they heavily feature 'lone parents' or 'domestic violence' to such an extent that dads will feel alienated? Of course such



information **MUST** be displayed: just don't make it overwhelming - or the first thing dads see

- Look in the Domestic Violence section of www.fathersdirect.com for information about support for men who have experienced violence or other abuse (including sexual abuse) or who are worried about using violence, and put that up, too
- Can you make the outside of your building obviously father-friendly using signage and / or images?

3. When to organise men-only services

As stated above, children's services should generally be designed to be equally welcoming, accessible and relevant to both fathers and mothers. Some separate services for fathers should also be available, but it is not practical or effective to set up substantial parallel services for men and women. Moreover, there are many benefits to both sexes using at least some services in common. Where fathers use services (as equal partners, not as "visitors") alongside women, this helps local communities and families to see fathers as central in their children's lives. **In fact, services just for fathers are unlikely to succeed unless other agencies and services are also engaging with fathers, and working with other family members on the issue of fatherhood.**

Where venues are used mainly by female service users, and staffed mainly by women, it can be appropriate to deliver some services for fathers at other times when they are not around. Many dads feel 'out of place' and 'on show' when they attend family services mostly used by women, or simply feel that the service is not really for them. Some fathers do not feel confident as parents, and think that looking after children - especially younger ones - is in some way 'women's business'. These men often feel more comfortable attending group or one-to-one services specifically for dads, run by staff that are particularly comfortable and skilled at engaging with men.

These father-specific services should also form an important 'bridge' to other local services (through referrals and signposting, and through staff in all relevant services attending the father-specific service periodically). Separate time-zones for dads can also help when women from some cultural groups cannot attend if male non-relatives are present; or when abused women need a women-only space to feel safe and supported.

Ongoing fathers' groups work very well for some men, and should be available to new and existing service users. Dads' groups work best if the worker gives the fathers a strong sense of ownership about what happens, and acts as a facilitator, not an expert. More intensive groups are unlikely to attract large numbers of fathers, but are an important support for some fathers.

Effective multi-agency working

Do...

- establish effective signposting and referral mechanisms for fathers, with other agencies working with families
- work in partnership with local agencies that are in contact with men
- encourage other local partners to provide male-friendly services. Train them to do



so, if appropriate

- invite workers from other agencies into your services to run sessions for dads
- make links between local fatherhood and domestic violence services
- use national and regional 'father support' networks, and set up your own local networks - a 'strategic' one for managers, linked to a 'peer support and review' one for staff.

Don't...

- only partner with other children and families agencies - which will mostly be working with women.



6. Dealing with barriers and difficulties.

There may be times when primary carers, who are usually mothers, are reluctant to involve fathers. This can reveal a lot about the child's experiences of family life and male role models. Whilst it is clear that concerns need to be taken seriously, there is also overwhelming evidence that children fare better when their fathers are involved in their lives.

Most mothers will readily give information when you explain why you want it. But some mothers will say they do not want to give your agency information about the father, or do not know it. Occasionally, they will not know the identity or contact details of the father, but it is far more likely that they are feeling uncomfortable or confused about revealing this information for various reasons. You should try to explore their concerns sensitively at this point. Your response will depend on all the circumstances, but is likely to include saying that you know that some mothers have anxieties about what will happen if they reveal the father's contact details, but that any information she gives you will be confidential (subject to the proviso that child protection concerns might require disclosure).

You should routinely review whether the information you hold on all families is adequate. Where the father's details are not yet recorded, you should generally ask the mother for them again at an appropriate time, explain why you are asking, and sensitively explore her possible anxieties. Some workers may not feel confident or comfortable about this process, but it is important to explore with the mother what she is concerned about. A lead person or other agency may be able to take on this piece of work so that it does not detract from other work.

Agencies need to develop clear and appropriate protocols for dealing with such barriers for the benefit of children, and make strenuous efforts to resolve issues. In any event, agencies, through their individual policies, will need to give due regard to the needs of primary carers and deal with issues sensitively. Similarly sensitivity will be needed when contacting fathers. Agencies need to be clear about their roles and those of other agencies.

Confidentiality

Clarity around confidentiality can be very helpful in addressing concerns and may, by itself, resolve matters. Agency information may need to be marked as confidential and systems put in place to ensure this is maintained. Demonstrating how this is done can alleviate the concerns of an anxious parent.

Agencies legally permitted to record information given by mothers about the father when he is not present - even when he isn't married to her, doesn't live with her, and doesn't have Parental Responsibility (see Appendix 3 for more about Parental Responsibility). Once you've recorded his details you should inform him you hold them, explain why and tell him who to contact if he wants to check their accuracy or have them removed.



Where a father's whereabouts are not known

There are many services such as 192.com that can be used to search public information (e.g. electoral registers) and these can be very effective tools for locating fathers. Clear information about names, middle names, and past locations will help this process. Other family members such as paternal grandparents will also be valuable sources of information.

Risk issues

Where information is received that the father may be a risk to the children or other family members, agencies have a duty to both parents and the child to ensure this is followed up. Clear protocols should be developed including the use of specialist agencies such as mediation services, domestic violence services, social services departments, the probation service, and the Police.

A father who is positively identified as a risk to a child need not be wholly excluded from that child's life. For example, letter contact or taped stories may be appropriate and safe ways to promote a father- child relationship. In this event due regard will need to be given to the Kent Safeguarding Children Procedures and agencies should also have procedures in place to protect the safety of their staff and other service users.

Court orders

If a mother (or other primary carer) is the only person with parental responsibility it will be for them to decide whether their concerns have been addressed, and what information to give your agency. Court orders may re-enforce the parent/carer's position and agencies should satisfy themselves that any such orders are complied with.



7. Supporting staff to be father-inclusive

Summary

All family services should develop their workforce to be confident and skilled at engaging with fathers. Recruitment, induction, training and supervision should be used systematically to strengthen their knowledge, skills and attitudes in supporting father-child relationships.

Family services need to ensure that all their staff have clear guidelines about their role in engaging with and supporting fathers, and are informed about why fathers are important to children.

All job descriptions and job adverts should refer to 'mothers' and 'fathers' (not parents), and explicitly state that these roles involve engaging with and supporting fathers. Person specifications should all reflect the qualities needed to support father-child relationships effectively.

All staff supervision sessions should routinely address engagement and non-engagement with fathers. There should also be ongoing whole team training about different aspects of father-inclusive services, where possible on a multi-agency basis.

The key qualities staff need in order to engage well with dads are largely the same as they need for any direct work with families (good interpersonal - especially listening - skills; empathy; commitment etc.) but many workers display such qualities more readily with female service users. This can be due to lack of awareness about how important fathers are to their children (and how they impact on mothers too); lack of clarity that it is a core part of their role to engage with and support fathers; inexperience or negative experiences with men.

Family services need to ensure that all their staff have clear guidelines about their role in engaging with and supporting fathers, and are informed about why fathers are important to children. Of course individual staff roles and responsibilities with fathers will vary (e.g. outreach workers will adopt a more community-based approach) and more complex issues should be addressed by more experienced workers. The key is to work well together as a team. For example, in one dads-and-kids weekend activity project, outreach and centre-based staff recruit the families, an outward bound coach manages the activities, and a trained counsellor focuses on father-child relationships.

Supporting father-child relationships isn't just about working with fathers: **it affects how we engage with the whole family.** It is important to encourage mothers to think about the importance of fathers to children, address any concerns and - sometimes - help them work through pain or disappointment. Some mothers may need support to try to involve fathers who have slipped out of children's lives. A child who tells you she doesn't have a daddy may need help to explore feelings - and the mother may need to talk about it too.

Do workers engaging with men have to be male?



No. Women can work very successfully with fathers. Most dads say skills and attitudes matter most, and some even prefer a female worker. But male workers can 'model' caring for children as a male activity; bring a male perspective to service provision; and help male service users feel 'at home'. Male workers and volunteers should be people local fathers can identify with, or accept as their advocate - and can sometimes be recruited from amongst your existing service users. Male and female workers working co-operatively can also be powerful role models for male and female service users.

Recruitment and job descriptions

You should review all job descriptions and job adverts to ensure that they refer to 'mothers' and 'fathers' (not parents), and explicitly state that these roles involve engaging with and supporting fathers. Person specifications should all reflect the qualities needed to support father-child relationships effectively - understanding and valuing the role fathers play in their children's lives; and being committed to supporting father-child relationships. Where there is a specialist fatherhood worker, you should define their specific responsibilities carefully and realistically, including how their role integrates with and is supported by colleagues' roles.

Supervision, training and on-the-job support

All supervision sessions in family services should routinely address engagement and non-engagement with fathers. There should be clear 'prompt' questions: 'How are you including fathers?', 'How's it going working with fathers?'

There should be ongoing team training about different aspects of father inclusive services, where possible on a multi-agency basis. This should include building skills and knowledge, as well as personal reflection (in groups and one-on-one as necessary, with appropriate support provided) to explore staff attitudes to engaging with fathers.

Less experienced workers should be given opportunities to build their skills and confidence at engaging with fathers. For example, a more experienced worker (or a dads' worker) could accompany outreach staff in home visiting, to "model" positive engagement with fathers, and workers other than the fathers' worker should be encouraged to attend any dads' groups. Staff should be required to "audit" male involvement in order both to obtain both baseline-data and to help them "see" the men already accessing the service, however indirectly.

Developing your staff team

Do...

- routinely use team meetings, supervision, team building days etc to support and assess all workers' practice around fatherhood
- consider a male worker recruitment target
- recruit male workers/volunteers to work directly with fathers and their families: use employment services and local childcare courses to promote recruitment opportunities; celebrate male worker role models in schools / children's centres



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- support local dads to act as 'ambassadors' for your services in local communities
- recruit volunteers through adult education courses, churches/mosques etc. community groups and local volunteer bureaux.
- seek out social work, health care and nursery students to work with dads.

Don't...

- assume female workers are not responsible, and equipped, for working with fathers.
- forget that workers / volunteers should encourage mums to reflect on and support positive father-child relationships.
- accept staff attitudes that are judgmental about fathers.



8. Reviewing father-inclusiveness

Summary

Monitoring and evaluation of all children's service providers should provide reliable information about the nature of fathers' engagement with local family services, and seek to identify the extent to which the fathers' engagement, and father-child relationships, are responding to the services accessed. To achieve this, all such data must take account of gender.

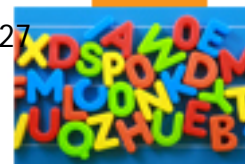
Monitoring and evaluation of all children's service providers needs to provide data on both outputs (e.g. number of fathers attending) and outcomes (what difference the service makes) in relation to engagement with fathers. This is essential to the development and delivery of services that are effective at supporting father-child relationships. Compliance with the Gender Equality Duty also requires gathering information on how services impact on women and men respectively and consulting with women and men who use services, in ways they find accessible.

The key outputs to measure are:

Note: Use this section to check your own father inclusivity with your colleagues and staff. However, if you want to assess your whole practice for mothers, fathers and carers please contact the Extended Services team in KCC or follow

http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/Community/com_sch_ext_parenting_strategy.cfm

- (a) **Local needs assessment:** Does the agency establish the needs and interests of different groupings of local fathers and their children? The agency needs to reflect the specific experiences and needs of different categories of fathers, through consultation with local fathers in all relevant social groups (including vulnerable and excluded fathers - e.g. young, BME, lone and non-resident fathers, step and other "social" fathers and fathers experiencing relationship difficulties, conflict or violence).
- (b) **User involvement:** To what extent have specific groupings of fathers been involved in designing the service(s)?
- (c) **Information:** To what extent does information for service users and referral agencies specify that the service is for fathers just as much as for mothers? It is not enough to say it is for the whole family. Information should refer to fathers and other male carers (grandfathers, uncles etc.) explicitly and explain that the services are for them too, as they are an important resource for the family. Information also needs to be disseminated in ways that are likely to reach fathers. Many of the traditional routes are through agencies that engage more with mothers and women, than with men and fathers. Agencies need to ensure that publicity reaches men.
- (d) **Policy statements:** To what extent do the policies, mission and objectives of the agency reflect an explicit and clear determination to engage with fathers (including non-resident and non-biological fathers)?



- (e) **Materials:** To what extent have any materials used by the service provider (or partner agencies) with families been “father proofed” - i.e. checked for their relevance to fathers, and evaluated by male service users?
- (f) **Referrals and signposting:** To what extent do referrals and signposting forms contain contact information and other relevant information about fathers and father-figures? This information needs to be disaggregated by different types of father (e.g. resident / non-resident; lone fathers; biological / non-biological; age / ethnicity of father; history of violence by father), so different patterns can be identified.
- (g) **Referral criteria:** To what extent do referrals take into account the needs of the whole family (especially the needs of non-resident and non-biological fathers) in deciding whether to make or accept a referral?
- (h) **Assessment:** To what extent are agencies assessing the needs of fathers once a referral has been made? To what extent are fathers engaged with in this process?
- (i) **Contact:** To what extent have fathers accessed services? The agency needs to break down its statistics for engagement with parents at all stages *by gender*, and include home visits, father “dropping off” or collecting family members, telephone / email contact, accompanying the fathers to appointments with other agencies, provision of direct support (e.g. one-to-one parenting support, support around housing issues, health, work, educational issues). Does this vary for different types of father (including non-resident fathers)? Where fathers disengage with the service, what reasons did they give for disengagement - and what follow-up was undertaken?
- (j) **Service design:** Are the services available at times and in places that fathers can access and feel welcome? Is the content of materials used designed with fathers as well as mothers in mind? Has the need for any dedicated services for fathers been assessed?
- (k) **Interventions:** To what extent do services working with fathers, mothers, children and the wider family focus on the need to strengthen a positive father-child relationship?
- (l) **User feedback:** Are the views of different types of fathers about the services gathered? What levels of satisfaction do they show? How are children / mothers / other family members encouraged to express their views about the ways in which our services include fathers?
- (m) **Engagement with other agencies:** To what extent do different types of fathers have contact, or more contact, with other agencies? Are local service providers leveraging in support from a wide range of statutory and voluntary service agencies (which may at times have a “male focus”), and referring on to a wide range of agencies (e.g. behaviour-change programmes for male perpetrators in domestic violence)? If these do not exist, are staff noting this - and is this information being passed on to the appropriate places? Are those agencies to which referrals are made responsive to the needs of the fathers? For example, do parenting classes respond sensitively to their needs and experiences?
- (n) **Staff attitudes and behaviour:** To what extent are there positive staff attitudes towards engaging proactively with fathers, and addressing fatherhood in interactions with the rest of the family?

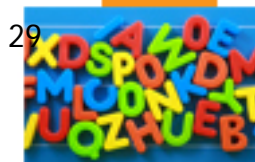


- (o) **Staff recruitment, training, support, supervision and appraisal:** To what extent does staff recruitment in children's services specify that staff need to have the skills to work with fathers, including non-resident fathers? Is there specific training around engaging with fathers and with couples available for all staff, including staff providing supervision? Has consideration been given to proactively recruiting male staff, and what reasons given for doing/not doing this? Are staff offered in-service support to develop and maintain their skills (e.g. team days)? Is the issue of engagement with fathers routinely addressed in staff supervision and appraisal? Do staff feel their needs in terms of safety, out of hours working etc. are being addressed?

Key outcome measures

These must be disaggregated to identify the extent to which the fathers' behaviour, and the father-child relationship, are responding to the services accessed. Measures can include:

- fathers' knowledge and understanding of child development
- fathers' awareness and understanding of safety, breastfeeding, nutrition and other relevant issues
- fathers' feelings of self-efficacy as parents
- fathers' satisfaction with parenting
- fathers' satisfaction with the service
- fathers' support for interventions with the children, e.g. around special educational needs
- better health behaviours by fathers (e.g. quitting smoking / smoking outside)
- quality / quantity of father-child interactions
- mothers' and children's satisfaction with father-child relationship
- child outcomes
- parental conflict
- couple satisfaction.



Appendix 1

The Fatherhood Institute

The Institute (charity reg. no. 1075104) is the UK's fatherhood think-tank, whose vision is for a society that gives all children a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures, supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers, and prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children.

The Institute:

- collates and publishes international research on fathers, fatherhood and different approaches to engaging with fathers by public services and employers
- helps shape national and local policies to ensure a father-inclusive approach to family policy
- injects research evidence on fathers and fatherhood into national debates about parenting and parental roles
- lobbies for changes in law, policy and practice to dismantle barriers to fathers' care of infants and children
- is the UK's leading provider of training, consultancy and publications on father-inclusive practice, for public and third sector agencies and employers.

The Fatherhood Institute is available to help you meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities presented by father inclusiveness. It offers a variety of consultancy and training options, and a range of publications, more details on which can be found on their website:

- **strategic training and consultancy:**
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&cID=687>
- **practitioner training:**
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&cID=686>
- **workers' helpline:**
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&cID=320>
- **publications:**
<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=0&fID=4>

You can also contact them on 0845 634 1328, or at enquiries@fatherhoodinstitute.org



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Appendix 2

Model of father-inclusive registration and referral forms

Please note: These templates are to give examples of how to include fathers in registration and referral only.

Family contact form

Please fill in a separate form for each child (as their family members may be different).

Child's Name	Address & Postcode	DOB	M/F	Language	Ethnicity	Religion



Family contact form

Family members and other significant people (including biological mother and father unless there are specific reasons why recording this information is not in the child's best interests)

Name	Address, telephone number(s), email(s)	DoB	M/F	Language	Ethnicity	Religion	Relationship to child	Parental Responsibility (Y/N)



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Family contact form

Reason for contact

Please describe the family's circumstances, including those of biological mother and father, any mother and father figures, and other family members and significant people (resident or non-resident with the child). Please describe any disabilities of the child's family or other significant people.



Family contact form

Has contact with the agency been discussed with family members or other significant people? If so, who, and what are their views?

Do any family members have a preference for allocation of key worker? (e.g. gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality). If so, who - and what are their preferences?

Key professionals involved:

Name	Name & address of agency	Telephone number	Email



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Family contact form

Form completed by:

Name	Name & address of agency	Telephone number	Email

Mothers/fathers/carers signing below are aware of and consent to their name(s) and the above details being kept on a database for monitoring service provision and for making contact in the future.

Note: mothers / fathers / family members / others listed who do not sign below must be contacted to obtain consent to their details being held.

Signed: _____ (Mother/Father/Carer) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Mother/Father/Carer) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Professional) Date: _____



Consent-to-Contact form for fathers and father figures

Agency name and contact details:

Brief description of agency and what services it offers that are relevant for fathers - including both mainstream and any father-specific services.

Welcome statement, e.g. "Fathers and father figures are always welcome to pop in and use our services and facilities or talk to a member of staff. Engaging with fathers is a priority for us, since fathers are so significant for their children's development."

Current activities include:

If you would like to know more, please complete the form below. We will then inform you and / or your children of future groups / activities.

Please Note: Your details will only be given to [specify agency].

✂ -----

Name

Address

Telephone:

Email



If you wish, you could give us details of your children too.

Child's name	Address & postcode	M/F	D.O.B

You could also give contact details of an adult who is likely to know how to contact you - in case you move house or your phone number changes.

Name	Address / phone number / email address

I give permission for my contact details to be given to [agency name].

Signed..... Date.....



Appendix 3

What the gender equality duty means for family services

The new Gender Equality Duty (Equality Act 2006), effective from 6 April 2007, requires all public authorities, including those commissioning parenting services, to have “due regard” to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. Official guidance to the Duty is available at <http://www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=19951>.

“Promoting” means being active and not passive: the statutory equality body and inspectorates will look for action and positive change as evidence of compliance. “Having due regard” means prioritising attention in proportion to its relevance.

Supporting both mothers and fathers in caring for children is relevant to gender equality:

- The lack of sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men (women do more) is the single biggest driver of the pay gap, according to analysis by the Equal Opportunities Commission. Supporting fathers to take on more of the responsibility for caring for children, therefore, is a key contribution to gender equality.
- Some men, particularly if they are very young, black, separated, mentally ill or from socially excluded families, experience real exclusion from family services – and the detriment to them, their partners and their children is significant.
- Children who experience diverse male and female role models in their lives will have wider horizons and opportunities as they grow up.
- Gender equality does not require men and women to receive the same service – there are circumstances where needs are different. But gender equality does mean that neither women nor men should be excluded from support they need. The Gender Equality Duty requires public authorities “proactively to address the individual needs of women and men in all their functions” (official guidance).
- Under the law, local authorities need to publish an overall scheme and action plan for promoting gender equality, covering all areas where gender equality issues are deemed to be relevant.
- More particularly, at the point of commissioning parenting services, a gender impact assessment is required, assessing the differential impact of the service on women and men. This will assess if there is evidence of different needs between women and men and whether both women and men’s needs are being met. It will also look at the gender norms and stereotypes that are being assumed. The Equal Opportunities Commission is soon to publish specific guidance on impact assessment.
- Compliance with the Duty includes gathering information on how services impact on women and men respectively and consulting with women and men who use services, in ways they find accessible. The compliance of local authorities with the Duty in parenting services will be actively monitored, along with compliance in other sectors.

For more about the Gender Equality Duty go to <http://www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=15016>.



Appendix 4

Parental Responsibility (PR)

What is it?

Parental Responsibility (PR) is a legal status an adult can hold in relation to a child, which gives that adult the legal authority to make decisions about important aspects of the child's life. These can include their name, school, religious upbringing and place of residence. Having PR does not, in itself, entitle a parent to live with or see their child; but a father who has it may be regarded more favourably by a Court, if this issue arises.

Who has it?

All married parents of both sexes have PR automatically, as do all adoptive parents and all mothers. An unmarried father doesn't unless:

- his name is placed on the birth certificate either at initial registration or at re-registration later - as long as this happened after 1 December 2003. This requires the mother's agreement
- both parents have signed a Parental Responsibility Agreement (PRA). This is done by agreement with the mother
- he has obtained a Parental Responsibility Order (PRO) from his local County Court. The Court can order this without the mother's agreement.

Since 93% of fathers now sign their children's birth certificates, most fathers of younger children now have PR. Grandparents, step-parents, same-sex partners and other people with day to day care of a child can also be awarded PR. This does not take away PR from either parent.

What difference does PR make?

Although day-to-day a father's PR status tends to make little difference, fathers without PR can't authorise medical treatment for their children, see their medical records, manage any money they've inherited, or prevent their adoption or change of surname or removal abroad. A father's lack of PR can also:

- undermine the family's sense of his commitment (dad feeling less involved, mum less secure and more responsible)
- undermine his involvement in his children's lives where this is most at risk, e.g. when the parents separate
- make it less likely that agencies concerned with his children's welfare will engage with him as a risk or as a resource for them
- mean he must obtain PR through the courts to be able to take care of his children officially, if their mother dies or leaves. Except in the relatively small number of cases where the father's involvement is very harmful, it is generally positive for children and their parents if fathers acquire PR early on, preferably at the birth.



The Role of Family Services

Many parents don't understand what PR means, and wrongly assume that a father has it. So it's important to discuss and explain it (signposting to good legal advice if necessary), and encourage their consideration of the father acquiring it. Remember that it is the mother's decision, unless the father applies to a court. This process also encourages parents to reflect on their expectations of the father's role. Mothers and fathers may both have concerns about the dad getting PR. Mothers may worry it will mean loss of control and should be able to discuss their anxieties with you (you may learn lots about the family in the process). Legally, his having PR doesn't affect her right to make day-to-day decisions and doesn't mean he can override her wishes. Where they can't agree on major issues, then they would need to go to court - which is also likely to happen if he doesn't have PR.

Fathers' anxieties may include the fear that seeking PR might:

- harm their children: in an unstable situation, will asking for PR make things worse?
- harm the mother: if she's on benefits, will his getting PR reduce her access to those benefits? (The answer to this is no).
- harm themselves: will he have to pay (more) child support? Or will that contact with 'the law' expose him to deportation, prosecution etc.?

Why do family services need to know who has PR?

You need to know who has PR:

- to identify who is legally responsible for children registered with you
- to clarify whether you need to address the issues about PR explored above
- to be clear whether you have a legal right or duty to provide information to the father (e.g. if anyone else with PR tries to tell you not to)
- because discussion of PR can help you identify whether a man is a biological father or a father-figure, and find out more about his role in the family.

Although provision of information to fathers about their children can be affected by their PR status in certain limited situations (e.g. as we've already mentioned, a father without PR has no legal right to see their child's medical records), PR isn't the be-all and end-all. For example, DCFS guidance makes clear that all parents (with or without PR) have a right to participate in decisions about their child's education, including being treated equally concerning access to information (pupil reports, parents' evenings etc.), unless there is a court order limiting this right. In general, however, whether a father has PR should make little or no difference to the services you offer him. Your agency should offer all fathers the support and opportunities they need to play their parental role effectively - irrespective of their PR status and the degree of involvement they currently have in the care of their children.



Appendix 5

The do's and don'ts for Dads

The do's

- Establish effective sign-posting and referral mechanisms for fathers, with other agencies working with families.
- Work in partnership with local agencies that are in contact with men.
- Encourage other local partners to provide men-friendly services. Train them to do so, if appropriate.
- Invite workers from other agencies into your services to run sessions for dads.
- Make links between local fatherhood and domestic violence services.
- Use national and regional 'father support' networks, and set up your own local networks - a 'strategic' one for managers, linked to a 'peer support and review' one for staff.
- Routinely use team meetings, supervision, team building days etc to support and assess all workers' practice around fatherhood
- Consider a male worker recruitment target.
- Recruit male workers/volunteers to work directly with fathers and their families: use employment services and local childcare courses to promote recruitment opportunities; celebrate male worker role models in schools / children's centres.
- Support local dads to act as 'ambassadors' for your services in local communities.
- Recruit volunteers through adult education courses, churches/mosques etc. community groups and local volunteer bureaux.
- Seek out social work, health care and nursery students to work with dads.
- Proactively contact fathers directly, or through other agencies / events that men attend. For example, run lunchtime sessions at local employers on rights / roles for new dads; encourage Citizen's Advice Bureau to run dad-relevant sessions on child support; suggest men's health sessions at local barbers; offer free family photo sessions for dads and children with local photographers, with a worker attending; get a worker to recruit dads at Jobcentre Plus.
- Run an ongoing series of events that highlight dads (e.g. monthly bring dad to school / nursery day; a trip out - take photos, then create a 'memory book' with dads and kids), and run activities (e.g. martial arts) designed to appeal to men. Think how to 'sell' these events to local mums (e.g. session where dads and children make a mother's day card; 'pamper sessions' for mums while dads take children swimming); and how to reach fathers through their children (e.g. put on activities for children - and get them to invite their dads).
- Regularly use face-to-face recruitment with individual dads (e.g. approach in school / local playgrounds with survey)
- Invite fathers to help you - e.g. run an allotment, cook, DIY, music session. Identify and build on their skills.
- Involve male service users in designing and implementing outreach and publicity strategies.
- Use dads to recruit other dads.
- Think about how to reach more marginal fathers, e.g. recruit non-resident dads



via food outlets, local park at the weekend, family lawyers, contact centres.

- Market your services through local media that men use. Consider launching your services for fathers with a local / national celebrity; running local 'debates' about fatherhood with celebrity speakers; publicising a men's health day etc.
- Explore staff attitudes / beliefs about fatherhood.
- Talk to local mothers and fathers who do not currently use services, as well as those who do.
- Analyse how supporting father-child relationships helps your existing goals, and build this into your vision statement.
- Develop clear, specific objectives concerning father-child relationships. Think about which dads you want to support, and why.
- Identify a lead officer for fatherhood in your agency.
- Establish a regular 'fatherhood reference group', jointly with other local agencies, for peer support, exploring practice issues and influencing strategic development.

The don'ts

- Only partner with other children and families' agencies - which will mostly be working with women.
- Assume female workers are not responsible, and equipped, for working with fathers.
- Assume dads aren't motivated as parents when they do not come along to your services.
- Rely on fathers contacting you simply after reading a leaflet - most fathers will only do so if this is combined with face-to-face contact with someone who facilitates their engagement with your service.
- Underestimate how much time and effort recruitment takes, or leave it up to one worker.
- Do not use the word 'parents' unless you have to: try to use 'dads and mums' or 'mothers and fathers'.
- Assume all staff have the same understanding and commitment about fathers.
- Settle for less commitment to fathers than to mothers.

This document is available in alternative formats and
can be explained in a range of languages.
Please call 01622 694044 for details.

For more copies of this strategy or for more information,
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