

# Working with dads and male carers

**Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board**

Responsible for scrutiny and challenge of multi agency child protection arrangements including early help



# Working with dads and male carers

Chair for the day: Alison Chapman,  
Designated Nurse and Safeguarding Lead  
Chair of OSCB Training Sub-Group

# Welcome and purpose of the day

## Agenda:

- \* Dads in the safeguarding network
- \* Whole family approach
- \* Fathers in substance misuse treatment
- \* Tips for including fathers
- \* NSPCC perspective on engaging dads
- \* **Break**
- \* Young Dads Collective: Ask a Dad
- \* **Round up and closing**

# Dads in the Safeguarding Network

Andrew Jones

Senior Independent Chair/Independent Reviewing Officer

# Blocks To Working With Fathers

## Dad can be:

- Seen as a risk
- Underestimated by professionals
- Overlooked
- Challenged by women in authority

## Professionals can bring:

- Own experience
- Transference
- Fear
- Institutional view

# The Only Man in the Room



- Fewer men than women in children's/family workforce
- May be first male to challenge dad
- Another male telling mum what to do
- Lack of clear expectations of father
- Impact of own experiences

# Basic Case Work

- \* Proactively seek dads out
- \* Acknowledge their role as a parent
- \* Explain the purpose of your involvement



# At Child Protection Conference

Duty officer will ensure;

- Dads details are held
- Dad is invited
- Support offered
- Relevant professionals involved
- Follow up contact with Dad prior to meeting

Chairperson will ensure;

- Dad inclusive language
- Explicit expectations
- Separate written agreement for Dad
- Dads parenting capacity assessed
- Dads views actively sought



# Aims for the safeguarding network

- \* Culture shift
- \* Dad friendly language and practice
- \* Promote the role of the dad, reducing burden on mum
- \* Learn from partner organisations
- \* Better understanding of Dads motivation

# Whole Family Approach

James Carter  
Think Family Coordinator

# Why Think Family

- Interdependency and inter-relationship of:
  - Risk, stressors and vulnerability
  - Strengths, protective factors and resources
  - Moving from risk to resilience, building capacity
- Compliments rather than replaces individual support
- To be child-centred is to Think Family

# A Whole Family Approach

- Family structure/ genogram
- Whole family assessment
  - Wider family issues, history and context
  - Individual risks, strengths and protective factors
- Whole family plan
  - Right agencies, right support, right time
  - Multi-agency approach
- Listening to the whole family's views – informing decision making

# Working with Fathers: Opportunities not Obstacles

Child Q – SCR



Baby 'N' – Case Study

**TURNING  
POINT**  
inspired by possibility



# Fathers in Substance Misuse Treatment

Sarah Hicks and Wendy Austin  
Safeguarding Co-ordinators  
Turning Point

# 2841 clients in Turning Point treatment across Oxfordshire in 2017:

- \* 55% identified themselves as parents
  - Of which two thirds identified themselves as fathers
- \* 36% of all clients across all substances identified as fathers compared to 19% who identified as mothers
- \* Does not necessarily include male carers

# Involvement with Children's Social Care on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018

- \* 172 parents involved with the safeguarding process
- \* 73 of these are fathers
  
- \* 71 parents are working to a CP plan
- \* 34 are fathers
  
- \* Remainder in CIN, TAF & LAC or under Assessment Team



# Being a parent can be a hugely motivating factor in change

*(Hidden Harm ACMD 2011)*

## Processes in Turning Point:

- \* Safeguarding form; places parenting on the agenda
- \* Staff trained in Parental Substance Misuse
- \* Men in the staff group
- \* Safeguarding leads, clinics & child friendly rooms
- \* Group programme; identities, roles & relationships
- \* Work with Aquarius

# 6 session weekly Parenting Group

- \* Devised from hearing from parents & Children's Social Care
- \* Reduces risk of being judged
- \* Programme includes; impact of sub use on children; talking to children about sub use; how parents can involve themselves in services more

# Issues raised by our fathers

- \* Not always included in discussions
- \* Excluded from change opportunities
- \* Mother seen as the “easier parent” so worked with
- \* Barriers to fathers involvement

# Parity for fathers

Goals for change being clear:

- \* Abstinent/safe use & how this links to parenting

Expectations of involvement in treatment:

- \* Testing/groups/keyworking

Expectations of involvement in safeguarding processes:

- \* Updates/invites to meetings etc

Where this cant happen- explain why not & review

# How dad-friendly is our school? Tips for including fathers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VneCtXdTWWU>

- \* Short film produced by Fathers Network Scotland



# Questions for practitioners

1. What can you do at every stage of a child's journey to improve engagement with father?
2. What can be done at every level of your organisation to improve practice with fathers?
3. What are the current blocks to working with fathers?
4. What own experience might you be bringing to your practice?

# NSPCC

## Engaging Dads and male carers

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

research  
in practice

Frontline  
Briefing 



**Working effectively  
with men in families**  
- including fathers in  
children's social care

Dartington

[www.rfp.org.uk](http://www.rfp.org.uk)

Journal of  
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## Engaging fathers: Acknowledging the barriers

**Karen Bateson**  
Development manager, NSPCC

**Zoe Darwin**  
Research fellow in maternal wellbeing and women's health, University of Leeds

**Paul Galdas**  
Reader, Department of Health Sciences, University of York

**Camilla Rosan**  
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# Fatherhood has changed

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Photo by H Armstrong Robertson

**In the 1960s, about one in ten UK men were present at the birth of their child (King, 2012)**

**By 2003 it was around 86% (Kiernan & Smith, 2003)**

**Fathers now spend more time with their children than they did in the 1970s (Asmussen & Weizel, 2009)**

# Fathers want to do more, but need support

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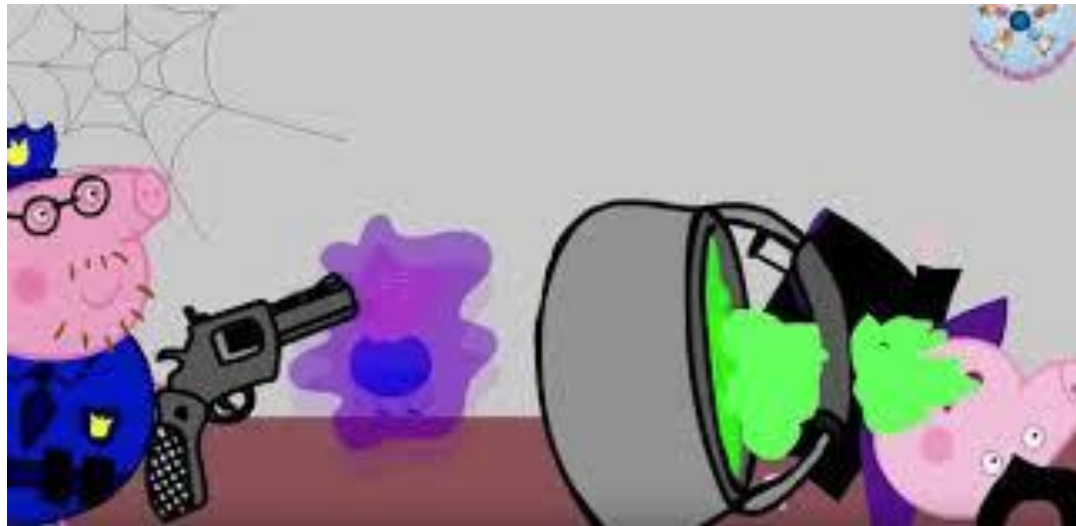
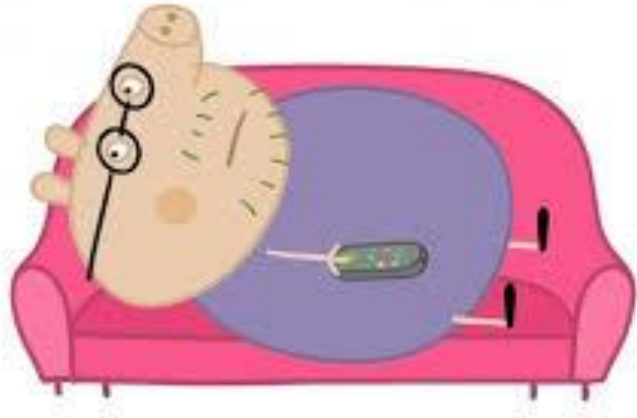
**46% still wish they could be doing more** (Parker & Livingston, 2016)

**Dads' role is changing**, expected to be more involved in nurture and greater sharing of caring responsibilities (McBride et al, 2005, Gregory and Milner, 2011).

**Many men feel ill-prepared** for the impact of parenthood on their lives and require more tailored information and support, especially where there may have been a lack of role modelling if their own father was less involved (Condon et al, 2004).

# Dads seen as lazy, feckless, dangerous?

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# Why work better with fathers?



# Positive father engagement is better for children

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Father involvement influences psychological, behavioural, social and cognitive outcomes

## ✓ Better child mental health

More father involvement is associated with better cognitive and social competence, improved capacity for social responsibility and empathy, positive self-esteem, better relationships with siblings and better educational outcomes, improved psychological and emotional regulation, social maturity and life skills in the child as well as a more constructive child/adolescent-father relationship. Sarkadi et al (2008) systemic review (18 studies) Goodwin and Styron (2012), Flouri and Buchanan, 2003, Reeb and Conger, 2011).

## ✓ Better child development

Fathers' positive involvement impacts on child development in several ways - directly through father-child interactions, indirectly through reduced inter-parent conflict and indirectly by acting as a 'buffer' for their young children against the potentially negative effects of mother's postnatal depression (Chang et al., 2007) . Supporting fathers therefore has the potential to benefit the entire family in both the short-term and long-term.

## ✓ Better educational outcomes

Martin et al (2010) and Welsh et al (2004) report that positive fathering has a noteworthy influence on school preparedness, academic performance and educational outcomes. Similarly, Wilson and Prior's (2011) literature review found that constructive fathering facilitated and promoted: fewer school adjustment difficulties, improved academic advancement, increased access to higher and further education with subsequent enhanced occupational attainments in adulthood.



# It's better for mums.....

Higher father engagement is a **protective factor against developing mental health problems** (Lancaster et al, 2010).

The mental health of mothers and fathers is modestly correlated (Paulson & Bazemore 2010) and **early paternal depressive symptoms predict worsening or continuing or maternal depressive symptoms** (Paulson et al, 2016).

**Strongest predictor of maternal smoking** during pregnancy was the partner's smoking status (Two Fatherhood Institute reviews 2007, 2015)



# It's better for dads.....



- ✓ Improved father-child relationships
- ✓ Improved couple relationships  
(Early Intervention Foundation – emphasises importance of inter-parental relationship)
- ✓ Improved self esteem and mental health  
Approx 5-10% of fathers experience perinatal depression (Paulson and Bazemore, 2010) and approx 5-15% experience perinatal anxiety (Leach et al, 2016).
- ✓ Improved engagement in employment/education  
eg Young Dads Collective

**The role of the father is important in its own right**

# It's better for workers.....

**A lack of engagement with dads can mean that risks are not assessed and dealt with effectively (eg Maxwell 2012)**

**Fathers continue to be underused as a source of support for their children (Fisher, 2007)**

## **Example: Increasing breastfeeding rates**

Mothers with a partner who supports their decision to breastfeed are more likely to be breastfeeding on discharge from hospital (Scott et al, 2001) and to breastfeed for a longer duration (Brown and Lee, 2011). Father-inclusive breast feeding education and support was shown to reduce postnatal anxiety (Tohotoa et al, 2011)





# It's better for gender equality.....

A Real 1950s  
cleaning routine



For Our Modern Day World



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**Why don't we  
work better  
with fathers?**







We've  
10,000  
H...

# Barriers to engaging fathers

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- Time
- Fear of being assaulted, stalked, intimidated
- Our childhood experiences formed unconscious views of men
- Nowhere to talk about it, insufficient healthy challenge
- Don't know what fathers want or need

Being included  
late or as a last  
resort

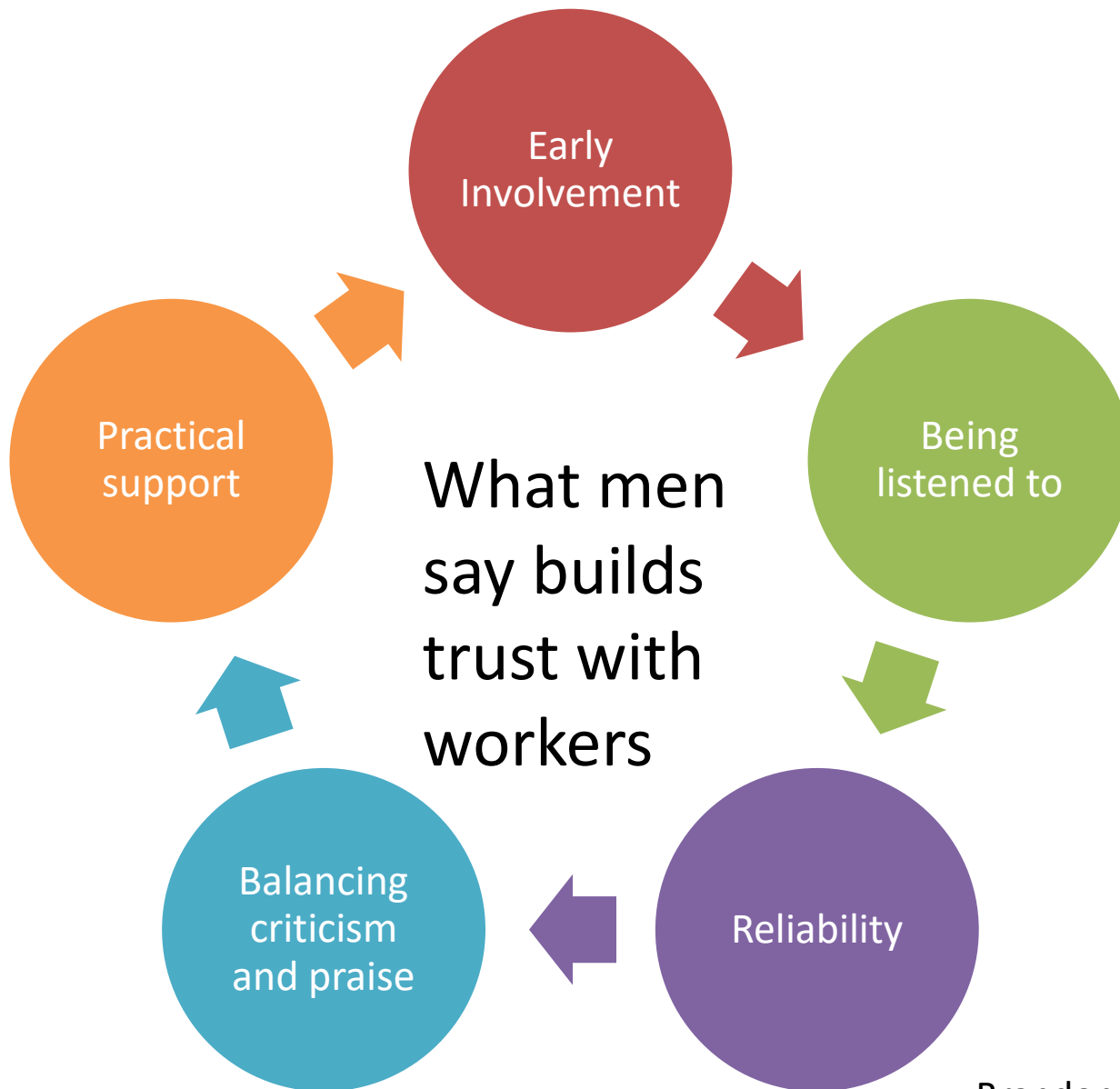
Being labelled  
difficult

Not getting a  
fair hearing

Insulted and  
ignored

Lack of flexibility

It's the social  
workers that are  
'hard to reach'



Brandon et al, 2017

# Mother-centric practice and maternal gate-keeping

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“It is important, when undertaking assessments and implementing plans of support and/or protection of children, that there is professional engagement with both parents/carers and extended family. *Working Together* 2013 clearly identified this as a priority, unless to do so would put the children at risk, as do OSCB Procedures for Initial CP Conferences<sup>15</sup>.”

“The SCR mentioned above highlighted the lack of involvement by fathers in early midwifery and health visitor intervention. [It] is a problem that has been highlighted nationally, and government policy has introduced a number of initiatives to improve fathers’ participation”.

# Practical ideas

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- Assertive and tailored outreach to dads (Lloyd et al 2001)
- Family Group Conferencing (Ashley 2011)
- Employing male workers (Lloyd et al 2001) although mixed evidence
- More skills focussed interventions (less talking)

## Ferguson (2016)

- Invest time in building relationship with dads
- Focus on strengths
- Therapeutic, holistic approach
- Early help, especially during pregnancy and after birth
- Overcoming structural barriers
- Parenting groups – messages tailored for dads
- Peer Support networks eg Young Dads Collective
- Motivational Interviewing (see Scourfield et al 2012)
- Restorative practice and supervision



# In addition to trust, respect, reliability etc.....

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- Check yourself, your expectations, your childhood experiences, your bias
- Recognise fathers can be vulnerable, are always important, predominantly want to be a good father
- Talk about your worries – with peers and in supervision
  
- Ask who dad is, know his name and contact details
- Due diligence with absent fathers – see RiP guide
- Try to meet him, if not, communicate some other way
- Make it clear he's included in this
- Invite him to meetings – and be on time
- Inform of significant events and send minutes of meetings
- Be mindful of maternal gate keeping
- Understand the inter-parental relationship
- Acknowledge strengths

# NSPCC

## Engaging Dads and male carers

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

# Break



[www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org) 

**@YoungDadsCo**

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# OSCB Practitioner Tools

These all can be found on our website [WWW.OSCB.ORG.UK](http://WWW.OSCB.ORG.UK)



Summing up the morning

# Thanks for coming today

Please remember to leave us your feedback