

MEN AND THEIR CHILDREN (MATCH)

CASE STUDY: DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY DADS GROUP CREATES 'MATCH' MADE IN HEAVEN



A community project in Dumfries and Galloway is not only helping to bring dads and their children together, but is also creating shared learning experiences in an area that suffers from high levels of deprivation.

MATCH (Men and their Children) has been running since 2005, and is delivered by a team from Dumfries & Galloway Council including Community Learning & Development and Family Learning staff. The team facilitates MATCH groups at two local primary schools in a catchment area that suffers from poverty, high unemployment and

restricted access to services, and in the past 11 years has successfully run hundreds of joint learning experiences and trips.

Mary-Ann Riddell, Family Learning Co-ordinator explains: "More fathers are taking responsibility for childcare nowadays, and indeed traditional roles are changing, with dads spending more time with their children. Evidence from recent educational research also shows that when fathers are involved in their child's education, attainment rises and behaviour in school improves."

"Family Learning programmes had been running successfully in both schools, however the vast majority of participants were women. We knew that dads found it harder to strike up conversation at the school gates and engage with other like-minded men, so for this reason a concerted effort was made to engage with dads and male carers and to encourage their involvement in their child's development and education. In November 2005 Dumfries & Galloway Council's Community Learning & Development Service, in partnership with Upper Nithsdale Primary Schools, launched two parent groups aimed specifically at men and their children. Both groups have been running successfully since."

LINE-DANCING TO KITE-MAKING

Since then, 'dads' and their kids in the area have taken part in a wide range of trips and experiences – from outdoor learning weekends where families have the opportunity to learn new skills such as abseiling and team building challenges – to line dancing and kite making. Recognising the fact that a lot of services offered to parents are held at times when most dads are at work, the events are held on weeknights and weekends to ensure they are inclusive for all.

Community Learning & Development Worker Jim Cooper leads on the adult learning side of the group. He added: "Men - whether that be dads, grandads or carers - who are involved with MATCH are encouraged to reflect on their own learning needs and aspirations. The aim is to empower men by providing them with opportunities to access adult education and community involvement and to ultimately develop their potential through training, volunteering and employability programmes.



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As such, many have successfully undertaken adult learning classes such as computing, digital photography, storytelling and core literacy skills development.

“Over the years we have seen how this has not only helped offer support and a social network for them as dads, but has helped to increase their skills and confidence in their ability to support their child’s learning.”

In Year of the Dad, MATCH is a great example of a community helping to promote the inclusion of dads in parenting whilst raising awareness of the considerable benefits to children through improved relationships with their dads.

CONTACT

All activities and trips are free. If anyone from the area would like more information, contact Mary-Ann Riddell on 01659 50275.