



CASE STUDY: How Circle Scotland celebrated Year of the Dad

Angela Gentile, Development Manager for Circle Scotland talks to Nick Thorpe of FNS

5th December 2016

Nick: How have you joined in with Year of the Dad?

Angela: As an organisation Circle have always supported the positive involvement of fathers; specifically in relation to Year of the Dad we have held four events

- A conference at Addiewell Prison
- The High-Vis Dads arts event – [watch video](#)
- The Circle Annual lecture ‘Talking Dads’ – [watch video](#)
- A Fathers’ Day Card competition judged by David Tennant – [watch video](#)

At the Prison Conference, four dads agreed to come back to Addiewell so that they could speak to dads, staff and partners at the prison. That’s a big ask considering prison is the last place they’d want to go back to, but they saw the importance of what they were doing. The fathers shared their experiences and challenges faced being a dad, seeking contact with their children, building relationships and choosing family over crime.

Nick: What difference do you think Year of the Dad has made?

Angela: We’ve always considered dads equally important to mums, along with grandparents and other carers. But what Year of the Dad has done is give us a real platform to shout about our work with dads and get other people to consider the importance of dads in families.

NT: Has your organisation become more dad-friendly?

Angela: We have built on previous work undertaken by Circle and supported by the University of Edinburgh researching how best to engage with vulnerable fathers to improve their individual circumstances, their parenting capacity and to build on their strengths. Based on this and our

fathers' workers experience we have put together a model of practice to improve outcomes for fathers, families and for children. We have drawn upon a wider synthesis of research provided by Gary Clapton, Edinburgh University, which highlights the difference a positively involved father can make across a range of outcomes for their children. All Family Support Workers see the importance of this.

The fathers Circle works with are affected by trauma, loss, abuse and experiences of poor parenting themselves. In some cases the families are affected by substance misuse, poor health outcomes and most face raising a family living in poverty. Circle believes families, including fathers hold the solutions to improving their situation. Year of the Dad has helped us to give a platform for dads to have a voice and to recognise some of the issues they face as societal inequalities. Some face cultural barriers of not wanting to lose face, or face gendered assumptions of parenting by services, many live in poverty and face the range of health inequalities that go along with this. No one family situation is the same. Circle wants to work with fathers and families in their own contexts and take small but significant steps alongside them to help families in the face of such vulnerabilities and adversity."

What Year of the Dad has given us is this springboard into conversations about why we do what we do. We feel that we're in a very strong position to continue to develop our work with fathers now. Over 40 partners have been involved in developing applications to fund 5 fathers' workers across central Scotland. The existing fathers workers based in Circle have been pivotal in this; their knowledge and experience has guided the work, as have the voices of the dads.

Nick: What is the one thing you would like to do next?

Angela: Our vision is for all the Circle teams to have dedicated fathers' workers to ensure vulnerable fathers can overcome barriers to support, are supported to build on their strengths as individuals and as fathers and to ensure that children have better outcomes. This is very much in partnership with our colleagues in health, education, social work, third sector and community groups and community justice.

Although we consider mums and dads equally important, there's a gap to be filled around the fact that dads often feel excluded. We're often talking to families where dad is on the fringes and doesn't know how to bring himself in.

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For more information on Circle Scotland go to www.circle.scot

www.yearofthedad.org

www.fathersnetwork.org.uk