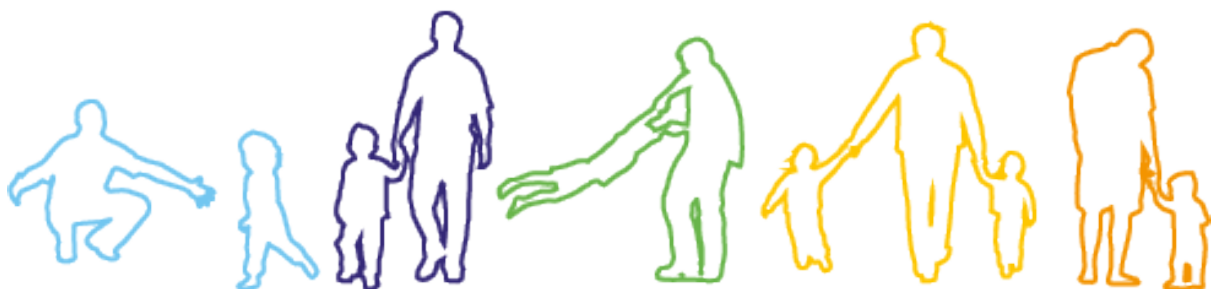




UNDERSTANDING DAD TRAINING

Impact Assessment Report: An Executive Summary
of training carried out between 2018-2020



Understanding Dad Training

Impact Assessment Report: An Executive Summary



Between 2018 and 2020 Fathers Network Scotland delivered **89 training courses** throughout Scotland to 1,126 participants from the public sector, NHS, and third sector organisations.



The Understanding Dad training enables participants to:

- improve their understanding of the messages children, young people, families, workers and services give and receive about parenthood, families and the role of the father.
- consider the effect of their practice on fathers.
- identify aspects of their practice they intend to change to become more father-inclusive.
- improve their knowledge, skills and confidence to better engage male parents and carers successfully.
- value and understand the role of the father and father figures.

Common challenges include:

- considering the implications of their practice on the role of fatherhood.
- developing their ability to identify aspects of their practice they intend to change to be more father-inclusive.
- improving their understanding of the messages children, young people, families, workers and services give and receive about parenthood, families and the role of the father.
- improve their knowledge, skills and confidence to better engage male parents and carers successfully.
- value and understand the role of the father and father figures.

A wide range of methods were used in the training sessions such as group work, presentations, group discussions, reflection on own practice and a focus on good practice. The key emphasis in the training methodology is:

Big Impact from Small Changes

A total of 508 evaluation forms were completed by participants who attended training courses. When participants were asked to rate how valuable they had found the course they had attended, **over 95% of participants** highlighted the course was “**extremely valuable to my role**”.



Participants told us they:

- ask for the dad’s contact details as well as the mum’s.
- ask to see the dad too, when making house visits.
- encourage fathers to contact their health visitor if they have any questions.
- address both parents by their first names.
- have secured funding for reclining chairs, blankets, kitchen equipment which allows dads to stay overnight in a maternity ward.
- have created videos to help families better understand the role of the father and its importance.
- always introduce information on dads’ postnatal depression.
- have introduced events aimed at dads.
- have paid more attention to gender bias in the leaflets and resources they use.

Many talked about **an increase in fathers using their services:**

“We dealt with two families lately where mental health was an issue. One was suicidal. Fathers felt confident enough to contact us knowing the help we could give.”

“Families realise that a health visitor is not just there for mum. Dad is just as important.”

“We find these dads so appreciative and really interested. They often want to see the garden, where the children eat lunch, how our rhyme time with the children works, and so on. It is just so clear how important being included is to them, but for us it’s such a small thing to make that little alteration in the general approach to our job.”

“We’re modelling how important a man is to a child’s life, how involved a dad should be in a child’s learning and development. I would hope that these children will carry that message with them right through to adulthood.”

Feedback from dads

In 2020 staff from Caithness Home-Start took part in Understanding Dad. Two fathers shared their experiences of using their services after the training stated that:

- they found the organisation extremely father-friendly.
- the staff constantly included them in the activities going on.
- they felt they were better fathers because of the support they received.

The impact of COVID

Whilst assessing the impact of the Understanding Dad we also enquired how COVID has been affecting organisations’ work to support dads & become more father-friendly. We were told:

“Due to the pandemic, we are finding that during home visits some fathers are much more available when the Health Visitor arrives. Naturally this is an advantage when trying to include dad.”

“The pandemic has seen the decimation of support services in communities who support the role of fathers in the family”.

“Family anxiety levels which are normally high, increased when COVID arrived.”

“We have had fathers who had to stand outside the window to see their babies for the first time. Utterly heart-breaking.”

“The mental health of fathers has deteriorated due to COVID”.

“It has been a challenge for family workers to engage with dads when there is lockdown in place. Communication with families has been affected. This has an impact on children.”

Conclusions

Feedback from evaluation forms filled out by training participants is exceptionally positive. As a result of the high quality of training delivered, practitioners have been able to use their learning to influence policy and practice in their organisations and to improve their work with families and fathers. Participants are:

- changing their policies and practice to make fathers more inclusive in the work they do.
- introducing group activities which encourage dads to be more engaged with their organisation.
- applying for external funds to increase and improve work being done with the sole purpose of involving fathers more.
- expressing that their knowledge, skills and confidence when working with fathers has improved significantly.
- less “mum-focussed” and are now keen to involve and engage with dads too.
- Better at sharing information between services with a greater understanding within partnerships and teams of the importance of fatherhood.
- attending training from right across Scotland – 13 out of 14 health board areas

Recommendations

include:

- Further cascading the “training the trainer” programme to further embed good practice with fathers into organisational structures and ensure sustainability.
- Ensuring the Fathers Network Scotland training programme is sustained and rolled out further throughout Scotland.