

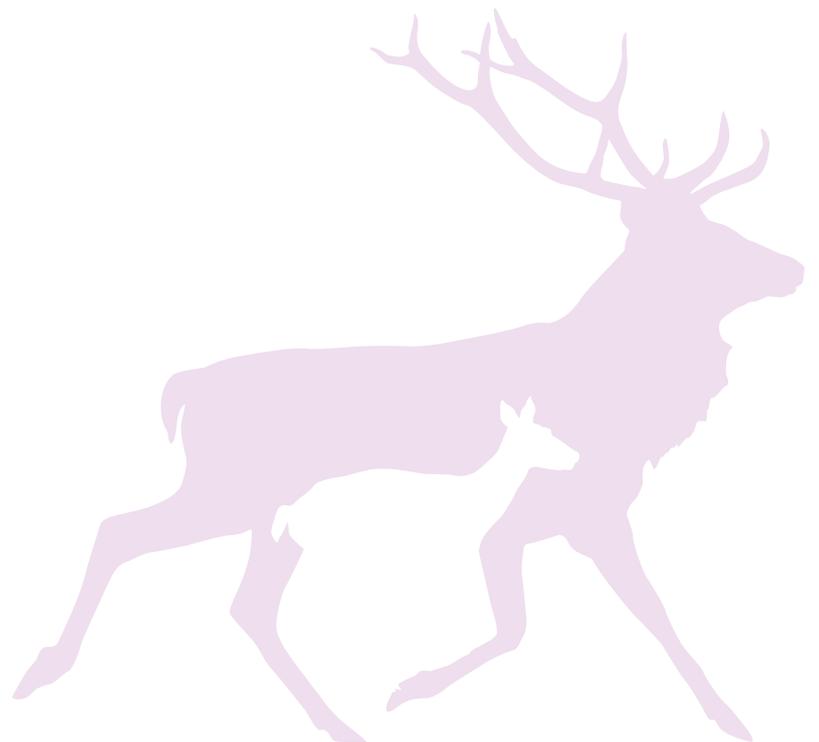


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**YEAR  
OF THE  
DAD**



**SOUTH LANARKSHIRE  
COMMUNITY LEARNING AND  
HOME SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**



## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COMMUNITY LEARNING AND HOME SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Involving dads in their children's learning has been a priority in South Lanarkshire since 2006, when a change in strategy was prompted after a review of service statistics revealed that only 11% of Home School Partnership Service users were male. By 2014, that figure had increased to over a quarter and work to proactively engage fathers across the council services continues to expand.

*'It's a whole service approach. It's about changing staff perceptions. That's where we needed to start so staff understand why it's important to engage men and to make sure they understand that dads have something to offer and that dads are welcome.'*

Fiona Robertson (Community Learning & Home School Partnership), South Lanarkshire Council

### AIMS

Work to actively engage dads in the services offered by South Lanarkshire Council began by staff advocating that the Home School Partnership should involve all parents – dads as well as mums - to improve outcomes for children and young people. The change followed a review of service statistics in 2006 which found that only 11% of parents who became involved in home school partnership activities were male.

Legislation, in the form of the Gender Equality Duty in 2007, further prompted the Home School Partnership staff in South Lanarkshire to think about how their support for children's learning could be improved by getting more dads involved. They realised that reaching out to dads would also help them achieve the main purpose of the service - 'engaging parents and carers in their own and their children's learning to raise attainment and achievement for all'.

A number of other initiatives such as the Early Years Collaborative project, have since been established by South Lanarkshire Council to improve dads' involvement in their children's lives.

The overall aim of these projects is to improve children lives by supporting both parents and other family members to be involved in their own and their childrens' learning and development.

### THE PEOPLE: THE PROJECT

Research, training and consultation has been the bedrock for the success of the Community Learning and Home School Partnership team at South Lanarkshire.

When a survey indicated men were involved at home but didn't attend services, publicity material was rewritten to pro-actively feature dads, and a website was set up to make it easier to access information (particularly for non resident or share care dads) at home. Home School Partnership staff were given special training in fathers' needs, and women in the community were encouraged to get dads to come to events in community venues or schools.

With money from the Fairer Scotland Fund, the Home School Partnership offered special events and trips aimed at fathers and their children, including days out to the Scottish Museum of Football, the workshop was piloted in September 2014 with 14 practitioners from the Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth CHP Public Health Nursing teams, including Health Visitors, School Nurses, Community Staff Nurses, and Community Nursery Nurses. Following a successful evaluation, the workshop is currently being rolled out across Fife to a range of practitioners from different agencies.

Hampden Park, a visit to Loudon Castle and a 'Celebrating Fatherhood' trip to National Railway Museum in Durham. A children's writing competition resulted in the 'My Main Man' publication of poems written about fathers and other male family members or father figures.

As local groups were founded and became more established, fathers themselves became more involved, giving feedback and making suggestions on how to attract more dads to come along and support their children.

## THE DIFFERENCE

*"For me it's about positive role models, getting out and learning new skills ... building camaraderie between the adults and the kids. Personally it's done massive things for me, it's gave me a lot of confidence. It's gave me new skills I've been able to get a job from it."*

Thomas Hand, Father, Hillhouse

By 2013/14, 28% of parents and carers at family learning events organised by South Lanarkshire Council were male and the work to increase that percentage continues.

The original project has influenced other teams at the Council to think about how to include dads. The Early Years Collaborative offered an opportunity for a number of local projects to work together to improve the inclusion of fathers and father figures in Early Years Services through the Making Fathers Figure Project.

Through its work over the years, the Community Learning and Home School Partnership team at South Lanarkshire Council has learnt that in order to change how practitioners value and involve dads, six key elements need to be in place:

- A whole service approach;
- Funding and resources alongside managerial support (this can be achieved from a redistribution of existing service funds);
- Staff buy in - it has to make sense to their core work and their concerns need to be addressed;
- Communication - everyone needs to hear about positive progress; getting families support - valuing mums is crucial to gaining their support in getting dads involved;
- Gain the support of all the partner agencies who might be able to influence dads experience in supporting their children.

### More information:

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