

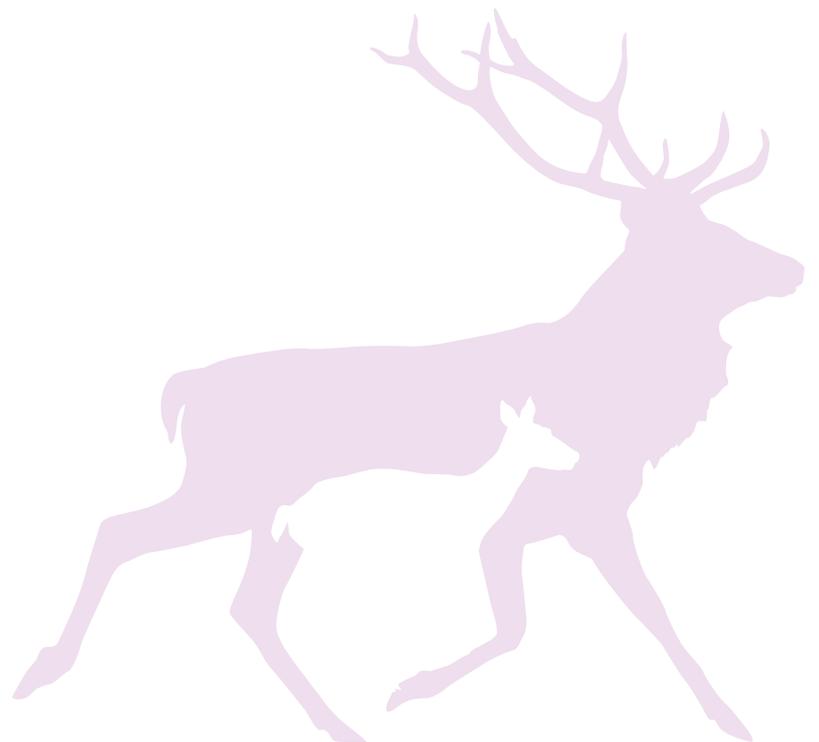


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**YEAR  
OF THE  
DAD**



**MIDLOTHIAN SURE START -  
DADS PROJECT**



## MIDLOTHIAN SURE START - DADS PROJECT

A suite of courses and activities developed by the Dads Co-ordinator at Midlothian Sure Start offers welcoming spaces and peer support for local dads so they can gain the confidence to engage more fully with their children and, thereby, generate a shift in attitude about the role of fathers.

*"Dads are encouraged to really get in touch with their nurturing character, to step outside their stereotyped 'manly' role and shift their centre of gravity so they are parenting as much as the mum."*

Tim Porteus, Dad's Co-ordinator, Midlothian Sure Start

## THE AIMS

The activities and courses developed under Midlothian Sure Start provide welcoming spaces for men to come together as fathers. The aim of providing such networking opportunities and formal courses is to encourage men to step outside their traditional role. By seeing their role as wider than that of breadwinner, the fathers come to understand that, not only are they as good at nurturing as the mother, but that their engagement in the early years is fundamental for the child's brain development and attachment.

Through offering spaces for men to come together with their children, the project also aims to shift societal attitudes by demonstrating to those around participating fathers (including their own children) that dads can be nurturers rather than just breadwinners.

Ultimately the projects focus on the child's well-being and making childhood as happy and secure as possible.

## THE PROJECTS: THE PEOPLE

### Midlothian Dads2B

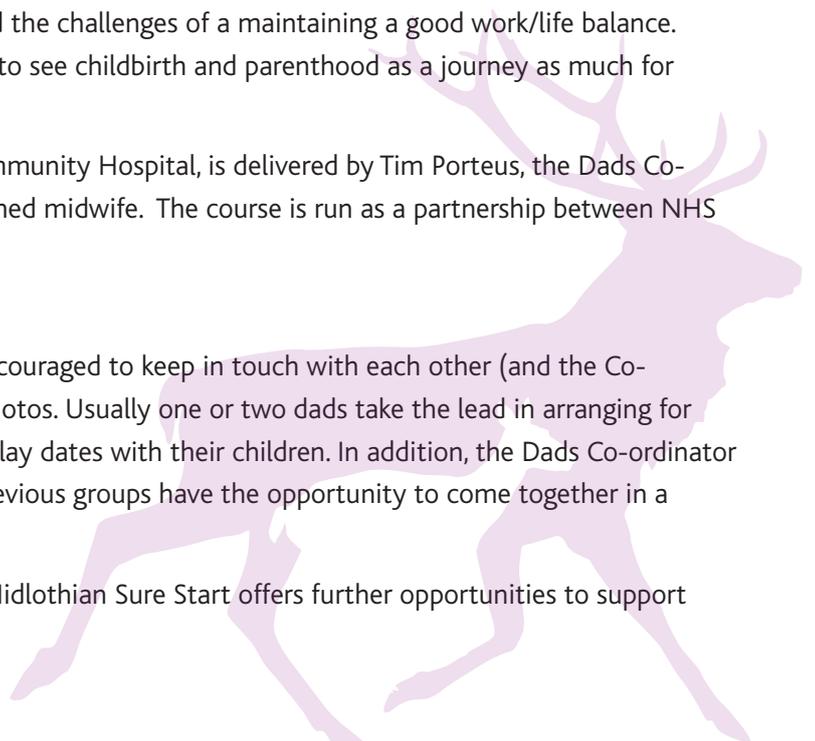
Dads2B is a free 5-week course for expectant fathers. While the course offers a range of practical skills around nappy-changing, feeding and First Aid for babies, there is a strong emphasis on wider topics such as relationship issues, post-natal depression and the challenges of a maintaining a good work/life balance. Throughout the course, fathers are encouraged to see childbirth and parenthood as a journey as much for them as for mothers.

The course, which takes place at Bonnyrigg Community Hospital, is delivered by Tim Porteus, the Dads Co-ordinator with Midlothian Sure Start, and a trained midwife. The course is run as a partnership between NHS Lothian and Midlothian Sure Start.

### Post Dads2B

After the Dads2B course finishes, fathers are encouraged to keep in touch with each other (and the Co-ordinator) through group e-mails and shared photos. Usually one or two dads take the lead in arranging for the group to meet up for social events and/or play dates with their children. In addition, the Dads Co-ordinator arranges ad-hoc trips, so fathers from all the previous groups have the opportunity to come together in a wider group with their children.

As well as informal networking opportunities, Midlothian Sure Start offers further opportunities to support fathers remain engaged with their children:



## **Dynamic Dads**

Dynamic Dads are playgroups for fathers which take place every Saturday in Penicuik and Mayfield. Although it only lasts for a short period, Dynamic Dads offers an important time in the week for dads to be the primary carer of their child and to engage with other fathers as carers.

## **Massage course**

The dads' baby massage runs for five weeks and is suitable for babies over 8 weeks. The course is delivered by a trained baby massage instructor and can take up to 7 dads at any one time. During massage sessions the focus is on dads being the prime carer of their baby for that time.

## **'Being a Dad' Course**

From January 2016, fathers can enrol on Being a Dad, a 3-week interactive course aimed at fathers with children under the age of 3. The course will look at dealing with tantrums and health eating, as well as offering a space for dads to come together and discuss their role as fathers.

## **'Raising Children with Confidence' Course**

Fathers with young children will be able to enrol on a 6-7-week course, Raising Children with Confidence, from January 2016, which will deliver research on children's developmental needs. Although the course will be information-heavy, there will be plenty of space for dialogue on the best ways to raise children. All of the above initiatives have been developed and are facilitated by Tim Porteus, Dads Co-ordinator and colleagues at Midlothian Sure Start.

## **THE DIFFERENCE**

*"16 dads started and 16 dads are still here. We don't miss it."*

Participant on Dads2B

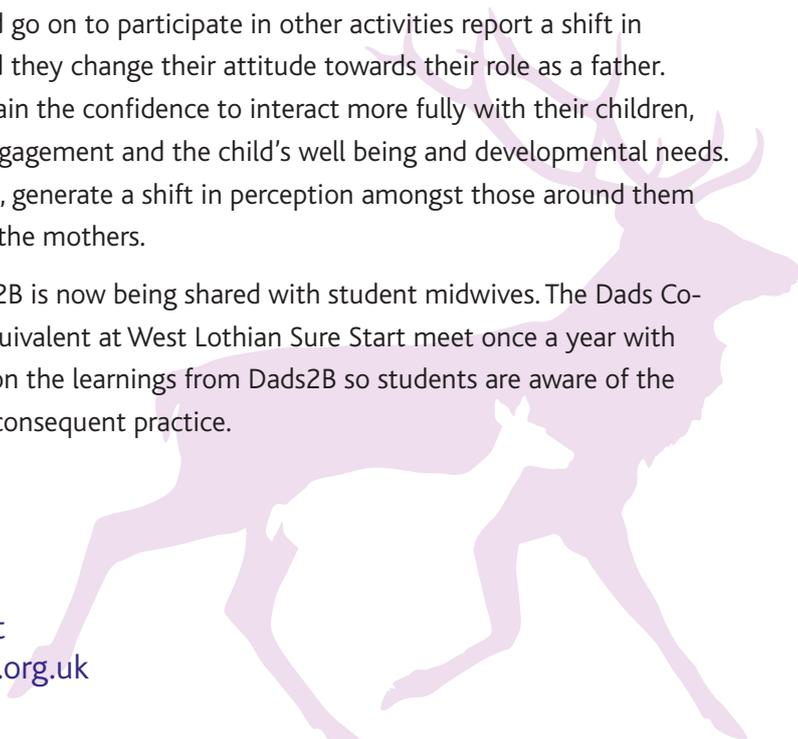
The success of Dads2B is clear from the ongoing demand - through word of mouth, 24 fathers turned up for one recent session! To meet the demand, the number of courses held in a year has now increased from 4 to 6.

While the number of participants is one indicator of success, the difference generated by the activities offered by Midlothian Sure Start for fathers is more fundamental and more subtle according to the Dads Co-ordinator, Tim Porteus. Fathers who start with Dads2B and go on to participate in other activities report a shift in attitude. They change their attitude to work and they change their attitude towards their role as a father. They start to see themselves as nurturers and gain the confidence to interact more fully with their children, understanding the connection between their engagement and the child's well being and developmental needs. Their changing attitudes and behaviours, in turn, generate a shift in perception amongst those around them who begin to view fathers as carers as much as the mothers.

The experience of men who participate in Dads2B is now being shared with student midwives. The Dads Co-ordinator from Midlothian Sure Start and his equivalent at West Lothian Sure Start meet once a year with student midwives at Napier University to pass on the learnings from Dads2B so students are aware of the dad's perspective throughout their studies and consequent practice.

## **More information:**

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