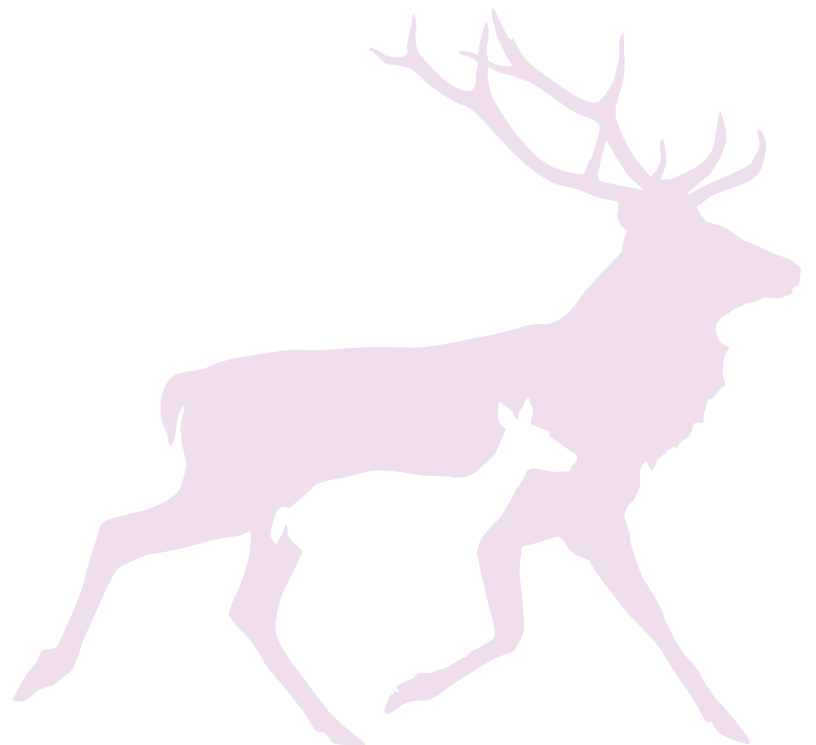




YEAR OF THE DAD



WHERE'S DAD? IMPROVING THE ENGAGEMENT OF FATHERS AND MALE CARERS ACROSS FIFE



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The multi-agency 'Improving Dads Engagement Partnership' shares a common vision to improve service engagement with fathers and male carers across Fife. A key outcome from the partnership's vision is a workshop to support staff working with parents, families, children and young people to identify and implement more father inclusive approaches.

"The model is based on evidence around what supports positive outcomes for small children. It's all to do with ensuring dads/male carers bond with their children."

Chris Mieзитis, Family Nurture Co-ordinator, Family Nurture Approach, Fife Council

AIMS

The Improving Dads Engagement Partnership is a multi-agency partnership with two key aims:

- i) to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of practitioners in Fife to successfully engage male parents and carers;
- ii) to establish sustainable local strategies in Fife that are inclusive of fathers and male carers i.e. 'father-proofed'.

As part of its strategy, the Partnership has developed a workshop with the specific aim of supporting practitioners, manager and leaders to consider the impact of their approach, practice and messages on the role of fatherhood and to identify aspects of their practice they could change to be more father inclusive. The ultimate aim of the workshop is to contribute to improving the health, wellbeing and life chances of children and young people across Fife by supporting fathers/male carers to actively engage in their child's upbringing.

THE PEOPLE: THE PROJECT

All the agencies involved in the Improving Dads Engagement Partnership recognise that fathers have a vitally important role to play in their children's developmental outcomes, particularly if they engage with their children from the outset. As part of the Partnership's action plan a workshop called 'Where's Dad?' has been developed to support that aim by helping practitioners working with families and children implement a more father inclusive approach.

The three-hour workshop starts by sharing the research that demonstrates the value of professionals engaging with fathers at the earliest stages of a child's life. Participants also explore the personal and cultural issues that shape perceptions of men and beliefs about gender roles, parenthood and family including subliminal messages portrayed by organisations and partnerships within family and children's services.

Building on that understanding, participants are then asked to look at their own practice before being supported to identify any changes they could implement to engage male carers and to encourage co-parenting.

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.

The workshop was developed and facilitated by staff from the following agencies: Fathers Network Scotland, Clued Up, Family Nurture Approach (Fife Council) and a trainee public health nurse. The Improving Dads Engagement Partnership (which developed Where's Dad?) is chaired by Chris Mieзитis, Family Nurture Co-ordinator, Fife Council, and has also representation from NHS Fife and (Third Sector organisation) Clued Up.

THE DIFFERENCE

“The model is based on evidence around what supports positive outcomes for small children. It's all to do with ensuring dads/male carers bond with their children.”

Health Visitors who participated in the Where's Dad? workshop

Where's Dad?' received strong endorsement from those who attended the first pilot session. Participants deemed the workshop to be either 'valuable' or 'extremely valuable' to their job with all participants stating they would recommend the training to other staff and colleagues. More importantly, all the participants were able to identify at least one aspect of their practice they intended to change as a result of the session.

The Community Learning and Development team lists six keys to success in valuing and involving dads.

- Arranging appointments when both parents are available to attend
- Awareness of the family unit as more than one parent
- Inviting fathers to be involved in decision making
- Engaging fathers if they answer the phone
- Taking into account fathers' feelings and emotions
- Knowing the dad's name when visiting families

Prior to the pilot workshop a number of practitioners expressed concern about how useful the session would be as they felt their practice was already inclusive of fathers. However, following the session, these practitioners were very positive about the training, having recognised how small changes to their practice could make a big difference in including fathers.


Following the evaluation, the workshop has been included in Fife's 2015-16 Health Improvement Training Programme and will be delivered to participants from a wide variety of services across Fife.

More information:

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