



Paternal Mental Health During the Perinatal Period

A CALL TO ACTION SUMMARY

Fathers Network Scotland

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Fathers Network Scotland's research over many years is clear: fathers often feel excluded from perinatal services, and perinatal services still tell us that they're not sure how to get dads involved. **Despite the evidence, paternal perinatal mental health-focused work has not yet been specifically supported or prioritised within the three-year investment into third sector Perinatal and Infant Mental Health work.**

Suicide is the biggest cause of death in men under the age of 50 in Scotland, and we know that father and partner mental health is at increased risk of harm during the perinatal period. The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board was established in April 2019 in order to implement the commitments to improving perinatal and infant mental health.

We recommend that:

1. Paternal, partner and carer suicide rates during the perinatal period are recorded, in the same way that the deaths by suicide of women during or up to one year after pregnancy are recorded.
2. Paternal, partners' and carers' GPs are informed about a baby's birth. Currently only mothers' GPs are notified.
3. The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board commissions research on the link between the perinatal period and paternal suicide, and risk of paternal suicide.
4. Third sector services across Scotland who support male mental health and suicide prevention are adequately funded.
5. Fathers Network Scotland be included as a member of the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board to ensure the inclusion of paternal perinatal mental health strategy in local delivery across Scotland. Fathers, partners and kinship carers should be actively included and named in all Infant and Perinatal Mental Health support pathways.
6. Fathers Network Scotland's 'Understanding Paternal Perinatal Mental Health' programme is supported and invested in, nationally and locally, ensuring that the benefits of the learning that has taken place within perinatal services so far is sustained and made available to all perinatal frontline services across Scotland.

We are grateful to the following organisations for supporting this campaign:

- Andy's Man Club Scotland, a talking group for men
- Mind the Men, a suicide prevention peer support group
- Dads Rock, a group for dads whose aim is to improve outcomes for children in Scotland
- DadsWork, a community project in East Lothian working with fathers and male caregivers
- Home-Start Scotland, who support over 3000 families and nearly 6000 children every year
- Circle, improving the lives of children by strengthening families