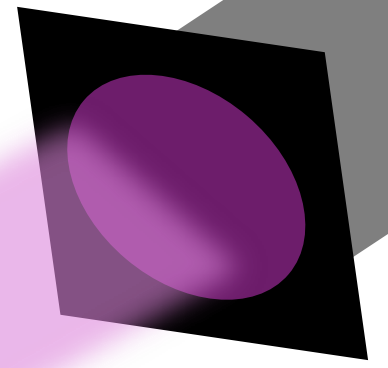


North Lincolnshire
**CHILDREN'S
MULTI-AGENCY
RESILIENCE &
SAFEGUARDING
BOARD**



In the Spotlight...

**Working and engaging with
fathers and male carers**

In this Spotlight...

In this edition of the Spotlight you can, find information about...

- Top tips for working with fathers and male carers
- Resources and sources of support
- Further reading
- Contacts

The focus of this edition of the Children's MARS Spotlight is working with fathers and male carers.

In 2021, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published their thematic review on ['The Myth of Invisible Men' Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers.](#)

A key theme of the review was that men are too frequently overlooked and are poorly engaged by universal and specialist services, such as midwives or health visitors. This then appears to set a pattern that is evident through targeted and specialist services, including care proceedings. The opportunity for support and for early identification of both parental and children's vulnerabilities and real or potential risks are therefore not maximised.

Too often men are either seen as 'good' and therefore to be actively engaged and entrusted with the care of their children, or they are deemed to be 'bad', to be kept at arms-length and, if possible, excluded from the family's life because of the safeguarding risks they present.

Mothers are more likely to be seen in a more rounded, holistic way, with their strengths identified and built on, areas of concern addressed and attention given to enhancing their support systems. Greater proportionate effort and attention is given to enable mothers to be the best parents they can be. This more nuanced approach does not generally underpin practice when engaging fathers.

The report emphasised the need to develop practice that improves the engagement and assessment of men and fathers and to ensure that they are being challenged and supported to be safe carers. It also highlighted that fathers and male carers should be included in antenatal and postnatal health provision to include extra support to those who need it.

Top tips for working with fathers and male carers

Start early – Identify, engage and involve fathers, partners and wider family members at the earliest stage

Don't jump straight to the 'dad group' model – it works for some but for others it increases their feelings of being isolated and excluded

Make meetings and services relevant – father's and male partners often respond positively when they know why we are doing something. i.e. explain the impact on their child's development and how doing something differently leads to the best outcomes for their child

Be consistent, flexible and proactive - invite them to all meetings about their child and don't accept passive engagement

Consider fathers and partners' mental health during the perinatal period – ask 'how are you, dad?'

Be vigilant to the possibility of mothers acting as 'Gatekeepers', blocking your access to both resident and non-resident fathers – be clear of expectations that the father has a role to play in any plan or intervention

Check your language – using words like 'men' and 'the male' to describe a father or co-parent can be dehumanising – if in doubt ask them what they want to be called

Appreciate the importance and potential contribution of fathers, irrespective of whether or not they are resident, or appear actively involved

Give recognition to fathers with cultural and ethnic differences and offer alternative forms of provision

Engage with fathers where they are thinking about themselves as fathers. Talk about being a father as motivation for accessing support

Resources and sources of support

[Tedx Talk – The Importance of new fathers’ mental health](#)

In this video, Mark discusses his lived experience of witnessing his wife go through a traumatic birth and post-natal depression and how this impacted upon his own mental health and parenting. He discusses the importance of supporting new fathers with their wellbeing

[The Queer Parenting Partnership](#) offers support groups, advice and guidance for LGBTQ+ parents and families

[Think Fathers! Why Men Matter video](#) dads share their experiences in relation to the difficulties in being involved in their children’s upbringing when services are mother-focussed

[The Dad’s Matter website](#) has a number of blogs that explore fathers’ experiences of being a new parent

Their [YouTube channel](#) also includes the lived experiences of the fathers they have supported

[The Fatherhood Institute Professional practice in working with fathers guide](#) sets out the qualities that professionals should demonstrate to effectively work with fathers

[Andy’s Mans Club](#) is a men’s suicide prevention charity that offers peer to peer support groups across the UK to help men through the power of conversation.

[Podcast – How are you dad?](#)

This podcast explores the challenges men face in becoming a father. It discusses the science, evidence and research to help parents and health professionals understand the importance of fathers mental health

[Engaging men in social care good practice guide by the Fatherhood Institute](#) provides advice to practitioners around how to engage effectively with men in or attached to a family.

[NSPCC blog on ‘Unseen men’](#) discusses why fathers and male carers often go unseen and shares advice on what we can do to make sure that we identify and involve men appropriately

[Working effectively with minoritised men video](#) – This video shares learning from the Child Welfare Inequalities Project’s approach to working effectively with men, including boys, fathers and male carers

[Future Men recorded conference](#) – this keynote speech looks at how organisations can working effectively with men, including boys, fathers and male carers

[The Queer Birth website](#) signposts to a number of resources specifically aimed at LGBTQ+ perinatal workers

Further reading

1. [The Myth of Invisible Men: Safeguarding Children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers \(2021\) Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#)
2. [Unseen Men: Learning from case reviews \(2022\) NSPCC](#) – This summarises key issues and learning for improved practice around ‘unseen men’
3. [North and South Tyne Safeguarding Children Partnership’s Engaging with fathers, partners and male carers policy and procedure](#) shares views from fathers around their experiences of social care and safeguarding systems
4. [Research in Practice - Working effectively with men in families – practice pointers for including fathers in children's social care: Frontline Tool \(2017\)](#) – This tool provides advice for practitioners when working with fathers and male carers
5. [Engaging Fathers: What about dad? – Community Care](#) - This article aims to help professionals engage with fathers to ensure they are not overlooked. The article also provides examples of fathers’ lived experience of services
6. [How can social workers better engage fathers? – Community Care](#) – This article shares the learning from a research study on an attachment building programme for fathers
7. [Engaging with men in social care: a good practice guide – BASW](#) – This guide offers strategies for engaging with men in, or attached to, families in which a child is at risk or may become so
8. [Good practice with fathers in child and family services – IRISS](#) – This article discusses the benefits of fathers’ involvement in a child’s life and how it impacts on their development

Contacts

The Children's MARS Board produces quarterly news updates which provide information on the work of the Board and includes updates on local and national guidance. We also promote new education and training opportunities, resources for professionals and volunteers, support for children and families and information relating to events and conferences through our communications email list.

If you wish to subscribe for Children's MARS communications emails, please complete the [communications sign up form](#).

A collection of our previous news updates can also be found on the [communications page](#).

The Children's MARS Board regularly post updates via the partnership social media pages Safe North Lincs. Support and advice for children and families can be found on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Follow us on Facebook [Safe North Lincs](#) or Twitter [@SafeNorthLincs](#)



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