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Case study title: The development of father inclusive practise

Date: 10th October 2024

Introduction

Research consistently highlights the vital role fathers and male role models play in a child's development, both short-term and long-term. Traditionally, mothers have been prioritised for support and access to services. However, the Family Hub Needs Assessment conducted in 2022 revealed that fathers were among our seldom-heard groups. Recognising this gap, we prioritised actions to better engage and support fathers in our community.

Consultation Process

In July 2023, our community development workers designed a consultation to gather firsthand experiences from fathers in Northumberland. This was widely disseminated, and additional outreach was conducted through 'Howay the Lads' sessions at Family Hubs, birth registrations, and speaking to dads in waiting areas in the local hospital.

Key Findings

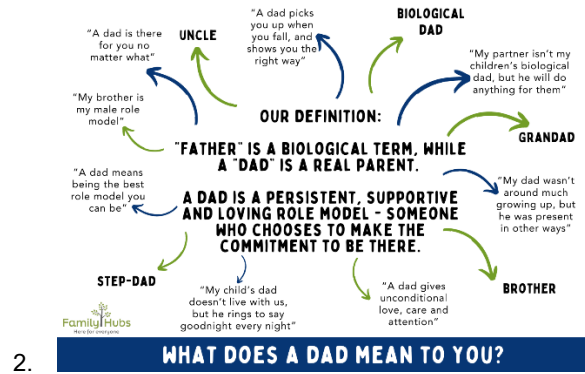
- 47 fathers completed the questionnaire.
- 26 out of 47 dads reported they had never attended a Family Hub before.
- 35 out of 47 expressed interest in attending future sessions at the Family Hub.
- Fathers indicated a desire for more information on topics such as pregnancy and birth, hormonal changes, relationship dynamics, appointment schedules, Family Hub activities, emotional well-being, unhealthy habits, and mental health support.
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In face-to-face consultations, fathers shared their feelings

- "This is the first time I have been given something directly for me or even acknowledged that fathers need individual support too."
- "In antenatal classes, I felt like a tag-along. A fathers-only support session would be beneficial, even if mothers can join in."
- "When my wife was researching things online, I felt lost and uninterested."

Establishing Fathers Champions

To ensure the success of our initiatives, we recognised the need for a skilled workforce to convey the message that fathers matter. In April 2023, 22 Family Hub staff members were trained as Fathers Champions by the Fatherhood Institute (as of October 23 this has increased to over 40 multi-agency practitioners). They now collaborate on an action log to enhance father engagement in Northumberland and have developed a shared definition of 'Dad' for staff us.



Achievements of Fathers Champions

- Distribution of Fathers Champion badges.
- Collaboration with Andy's Man Club to establish support groups.
- Creation of a dad-focused display board in Family Hubs.
- Establishment of a Teams chat for ongoing communication.
- Development of targeted communication materials, including leaflets and social media content featuring male imagery and messaging.
- [Launch of the Dadzone on our website](#)

The Northumberland Fathers Network

Recognising that promoting father engagement is a collective responsibility; we hosted the 'Dad Matters Summit' in February 2024. This event brought together 153 colleagues across Northumberland County Council (NCC) and partners to celebrate fathers' roles and discuss how to create more inclusive services. Over 60 attendees signed up to join the Northumberland Fathers Network.





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Services Implemented for Fathers

DadPad Launch

In April 2023, we launched DadPad, a digital resource for new dads. This initiative includes physical DadPad books distributed by midwives, health visitors, and the pre-birth team, placed in locations where fathers register births or attend appointments. Family Hubs have established a lending system for the DadPad books, encouraging fathers to visit the hubs. As well as this, the DadPad app can be accessed by any father in Northumberland. In the first quarter of implementation we had the highest uptake of any area, we attribute this to the close partnership working and promotion.

DAD Talk Workshops

From January to March 2024, we piloted antenatal workshops for dads in collaboration with North Tyneside. Feedback indicated a significant need for dedicated support focused solely on fathers during the perinatal period. Many fathers reported feeling uninformed and excluded during their partners' pregnancies.

Expanded Virtual Offer

In response to feedback, we now offer services during evenings and weekends, including HENRY programs, Parenting When Separated, Dad-Talk workshops, and family fun days.

Partnerships with External Organisations

- North East Young Dads and Lads: Secured funding to support young dads (25 and under) in Northumberland.
- Andy's Man Club: Collaborating with this men's mental health charity to establish peer support groups, including a new group in Hexham.

Fathers as Volunteers

In June 2024, Father Will shows us around Astington Family Hub [Click here to watch the video on Youtube](#)

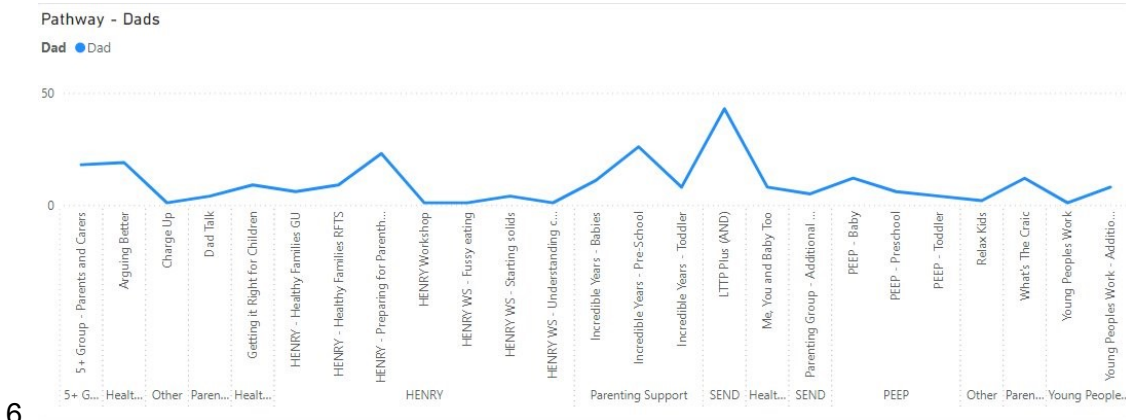




Data and Impact

Our initiatives have led to a noticeable increase in the participation of fathers and male carers in Family Hubs. Key metrics include:

- 608% increase in fathers attending Family Hubs
- Strong engagement in sessions delivered by Family Hub and Family Help teams.
- 15% of Family Panel members are fathers.





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Audit Findings

- Early Help Cases: 76% of referrals engaged fathers, with non-engagement primarily linked to domestic abuse (12%) or lack of consent (12%).
- Social Work Cases: 88% of referrals included fathers' engagement, with non-engagement largely due to domestic abuse (6%) or fathers being absent (6%).

Conclusion

Our efforts to engage fathers and male role models in Northumberland have begun to bear fruit, with increased awareness and participation. By continuing to prioritise fathers' unique needs and collaborating with various partners, we aim to create an inclusive environment that acknowledges the critical role fathers play in child development.

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1. *Picture: Fathers Champions in Family Hubs Northumberland.*
 2. *Graphic: What does a Dad mean to you? Identity brainstorm.*
 3. *Picture: Members, Fathers and keynote speaker at the Family Hubs Northumberland 'Dad's Matter' summit event 2024.*
 4. *Data graph showing the number of dads attending Family Hubs Northumberland.*
 5. *Data graph showing dads attending core sessions delivered by Family Hub and Family Help teams.*
 6. *Data graph showing dads attending core sessions delivered by Family Hub and Family Help teams.*



Northumberland
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Family Hubs
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