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Background

The role of dads has changed over time, through social, economic and cultural change.

The system for children and families is based on an historical model. It burdens women and often stereotypes or does not value men.

Dads are sometimes not seen equally and/or are seen as a threat or a risk.

Projects such as [Dad Matters](#), [Dadly Does It](#), [Speaking Dadly](#) and the [Young Fathers Project](#) have found positive approaches with dads.

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Why it matters

Dads have a significant impact on their child's development, whatever their relationship. The wellbeing of fathers directly affects the wellbeing of their children, and their ability to care for them.

Dads are a hugely underused asset in the lives of children and young people. Most dads love their children and want the best for them.

Some professionals lack training in working with dads, tend to focus on mums, and do not recognise, seek out or engage dads.

3

Information

Fatherhood should be seen as a positive asset. Fathers are very diverse.

How new fathers see themselves as parents and adjust to the role is linked with positive outcomes in children.

Wanting to be a good dad is often a strong motivator for men to act and make positive changes in their lives.

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Purpose

Positive fatherhood improves: the well-being of children and young people; the quality of family relationships; the well-being of partners/ex-partners.

Dads improve their self control, self-confidence and well-being.

Demand on services and professionals is reduced.

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Implementing change

Normalising proactive working with dads in daily practice involves listening, empathy and respect for dads, mums and families.

- Talk about fatherhood positively.
- Actively recognise what a dad does well.
- Be clear about your worries and what changes a dad could make.
- Include the dad within your work with a family.
- Consider when, where and how you meet with dads.



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Things to consider

Use strengths-based working.

Relate to dads as dads, rather than as men. Relationship building takes time and effort.

Enable dads to work together, 'shoulder to shoulder'.

If possible, work with dad and mum as a team, affording them equal importance while recognising their differences.

5

Learning

It is especially important to engage dads in the ante-natal period and early years - the relationship with the child is formed, and the tone and mind set are laid for later on.

It is critical to get to know each dad as an individual, and to create a relationship in which they feel both accepted and listened to.