

Engaging Fathers Across Croydon Project Initiation Document 2016



WorkingwithMen
Supporting Positive Male Activity Engagement and Involvement



Project Definition

This Project Initiation Document (PID) describes a long term landmark project; to improve the engagement of fathers in Universal, Early Help and Specialist Children's Services. This project is supported by senior managers within Early Help, Family Support and Children Social Care and by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Early Help Board, the Gateway Programme and the Children and Families Partnership Board.

The Project is coordinated and supported by the organisation 'Working with Men' who are resourcing a fathers' worker, offering strategic support throughout the life of the project as well as supporting an independent evaluation.

The Project implements strategies, methods, conditions and techniques to promote inclusive practice for fathers across Children Services in Universal, Target and Specialist provision. In particular:

- Gateway / Croydon Council
- Children Social Care / Social Work services
- Best Start
- Early Years Services
- Early Help Services
- Health Services

Context

The rationale to include fathers is founded in statute and through research. For example; the law clearly requires father involvement as fathers have the right to family life. The Gender Recognition Act (2004) explicitly requires that services make available equal but separate services for women and men. (Fatherhood Institute: 2011).

A further example is through research on child development where evidence indicates that fathers have a sincere influence on the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies. Fathers have an on-going long-standing effect on the development and attainment of their children. (Rosenberg & Wilcox: 2006). The birth of a child is a watershed in a man's life and presents the biggest opportunity to engage fathers: 86% of fathers are present at the birth of their babies. Mothers want fathers to be well treated as mothers benefit in a range of ways when the fathers of their children are involved and well informed. (Ashley et al: 2008).

There is insurmountable evidence, from across the United States, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada, as well as the UK, to state that children's services and social work in particular is ideologically and structurally resourced and practically geared to support women through mother and child centred practice. (Ashley et al: 2011, 2008, 2006, Amussen & Weizel: 2011, Hahn: 2011, Featherstone et al: 2010 and 2007, OFSTED: 2011, Fatherhood Institute: 2010 – 2005 and Smithgall: et al 2009). There is minimal, if any, social work being undertaken with men in the context of their children and couple relationships. Research literature clearly indicates that Children's Social Care and social workers are not organised, supported, resourced, trained or encouraged to intervene with fathers in any

meaningful way. (Folaron, Bai & Schneider: 2011, Ashley et al: 2011, Smithgall: 2009, Swann: 2009, Ashley et al: 2008, Strega et al: 2008, Rosenberg & Wilcox: 2006, Ashley et al: 2006, Mouzos & Makkai: 2009, O'Hagan 1997). .

Men as parents, as risks and resources to children are excluded from statutory social work assessment and intervention. This exclusion is caused by a complex set of variables including; negative assumptions of men are applied by social workers and other children services workers, social workers' unconsciously project their experiences of their father (either idealised or denigrated) when working with fathers, social workers, as a predominately female workforce may have direct personal experience of male abuse and violence prejudicing their view, social workers fear fathers' sexuality and fear physical and sexual attack by male clients. Additional variables for exclusion were also found to include a failure by social care organisations to support social workers engage fathers, a failure by some men to maintain their responsibility for their child, socio-demographic changes to contemporary society and the social construction of masculinity.

Fathers, Serious Case Reviews & Safeguarding Children Boards

The tragic consequence of the invisibility of fathers is powerfully evidenced by Ofsted's thematic analysis of 482 serious case reviews from April 2007 to March 2011. To précis; the analysis confirmed that: *'the role of fathers has been marginalised'*. (p10.21).

In summary, the analysis concluded that; child welfare agencies failed to recognise the significance of fathers in their role with children, (especially with cases concerning infants). Agencies fail to assess fathers and other men who may not be known to agencies but are present in the home. Agencies fail to engage with non-resident fathers and the wider paternal extended family. Agencies have ambivalent and hostile relationships with fathers; there was a failure to recognise the significance of domestic abuse and an inconsistency in thresholds and practice in relation to domestic violence. Social workers fear of violence also led to children being left in dangerous situations.

Ofsted recommended a need that Safeguarding Children's Boards develop a strategic overview to address this marginalisation and unmanaged area of risk. (Ofsted: 2011, Broadhurst et al: 2010). (The exclusion of fathers has been a recurring theme in many serious case reviews prior to 2007). Whilst analysis of initial and core assessments and initial and review child protection conferences indicate that fathers are contacted later in the process of social work intervention, (although very few decisions in relation to child protection conferences involve fathers). (Ashley et al: 2011).

Project Objectives

The objectives of the Project are to:

- Design and implement a long term project to engage fathers,
- Recruit a range of father inclusive 'champions'
- Instigate a seven point plan with a range of inclusive targets to support the implementation of a father inclusive strategy across the whole system

- Develop a father inclusive culture across our services
- A reduction in child abuse

Project Aims

- Fully implement a seven point father inclusive strategy across the whole system
- Increase in fathers contact details (telephone numbers, date of birth and addresses) recorded
- An increase in fathers identified and assessed.
- An increase in fathers attending meetings and reviews
- An increase in fathers recorded as having parental responsibility
- An increase in contact arrangements for fathers.
- An increase in social workers' considering the father's situation in ongoing planning for the child.
- Increase in fathers attending family Group Conference
- Increase in children diverted from care and placed with fathers or paternal extended families
- Increase in men held to account for the violence
- Increase in families (paternal) used as strengths and resources
- Croydon is known nationally as a place that involves fathers

Defined Method of Approach

We can include fathers if there is 'a whole system and a participative approach' which identifies how covert power and gender relations influence behaviour in practice. To achieve greater father inclusion social workers', health, early years, early help and other professionals' anxieties need to be contained through safety planning systems and quality reflective supervision. For fathers to be included senior managers and elected members must support the activity in the long term, (ten to fifteen years), collect data and set targets whilst strategically committing and realigning resources to meaningfully address domestic abuse.

Assumptions

The Project assumes that organisational change is possible if the conditions to foster emergence are in place, if the culture that operates in the organisation supports emergent creativity whilst espousing staff cohesion simultaneously championing social worker / professional empowerment.

We can divert children from care by earlier engagement with fathers and paternal extended families.

Business Benefits and Costs

A recent project to engage fathers in Conwy and Newport Local Authorities identified that, along with practice benefits and improved procedures, they were able to avoid proceedings and children were not taken into care. Local authority care costs vary but taking a minimal

figure from the 2012 Chief medical Officer's Annual Report of £35,000, and taking a conservative estimate that two children will not be taken into care through improved engagement with fathers, father figures and the paternal family, the cost savings for an authority would be upwards of £75,000 per year. This programme of work impacts on the working culture of an organisation and improved practice will lead to greater engagement immediately and should increase over time. The cost of the implementation depends upon the size of the authority and the level of training required. Cost of full intervention will be between £7,000 and £15,000. (Page 2, 2015: Featherstone et al). *'Safeguarding Children by Working Effectively with Fathers'; an innovative programme to improve safeguarding policy, procedure and practice'*. (The Croydon Project aims to divert 6 children from care per annum).

It is the project's contention, to be tested through independent evaluation, that by strategically placing a resource at key points within the process; a specific fathers intervention and a father engagement strategy at;

- Family Group Conferences,
 - Pre-birth and initial child protection conferences
 - And legal planning meetings / edge of care meetings
 - In line with other system behaviour and practice changes
 - Involve fathers / paternal families as strengths and resources
- With a specific intention to divert children from care in Croydon.

Benefits

There are several benefits for children in Croydon as well as benefits for Croydon public and protective services by developing a culture and 'business as usual approach' to fathers being engaged and worked with as early in any intervention as possible. These are:

- It is often in the best interests of children and families (e.g. UNHCR Rights of the Child, Right to Family Life and child developmental theory) to involve fathers.
- Children and women are better protected
- There is a legal and best practice mandate
- Early intervention means fathers may have an improved relationship with their child (less likely to abuse and neglect)
- Increasing the possibility of establishing co-parenting relationships (even if non-residential), meaning less tensions and less conflict and less need for state intervention
- Men can be held accountable for their violence
- A more empowered and confident workforce
- Children can be diverted from the care system by involving fathers and paternal extended families as early in any intervention as possible meaning less cost to the Local Authority whilst improving outcomes to children. (A Croydon Challenge initiative).
- In summary fewer children will be injured, abused or die, families will be more stable; there will be less violence with the need for state interventions reduced.
- Outcomes of intervention will be improved for children

- Further application of systemic theory

Costs

The costs to our organisations will be:

- The commitment of a number of professionals to regularly attend the Project 'Engaging Fathers' and then work in between Project meetings on agreed actions
- The time it will take to include fathers in all future strategic planning
- The cost of ensuring we implement a safety planning procedure for all staff working with fathers
- The costs of professionals' time attending training
- The cost of organising and running trainings
- The cost of potentially minor re-configurations of CRS and other systems
- The cost of developing a report and then producing monthly performance figures
- For organisations to consider supporting father specific services; Caring Dads, Expectant Fathers programmes and perpetrator interventions

Project Organisation Structure

The project will directly report to:

The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) and the Senior Management Team of the Peoples Department both groups sponsor the Project and will need to:

- LSCB members will need to support a Father Inclusive Strategy in their Organisations
- Sub-group chairs will need to include this strategy in their work plans for the next 3 years
- Directors and Executive Directors in Croydon Council will need to support and maintain this strategic ambition and vision for the next three years (minimum)
- Give permission to be afraid and describe the fear (Supervision).
- Authorise and resource staff to focus on this activity.
- Authorise and resource that data over father inclusion is collected, targets set and performance information is provided monthly.

The Project will be led by Gavin Swann, Head of Service Children Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Croydon Children Social Care and a member of the CSCB

The Project will require the recruitment of approximately 12 professionals from Early Help, Family Support and Children Social Care who are able to commit to a 2 hour meeting once every 6 weeks for 18 months. These individuals will require the following attributes:

- Be strategically and operationally involved with Midwifery, Health Visiting, Early Help and Children Social Care (and must include representatives from Best Start, MASH, CIN, Youth Offending, Leaving Care and the Safeguarding & Quality Assurance).
- Commitment to the agenda

- Organisational authority and permission to attend and work on actions in between project meetings.
- Ability to sustain that commitment in the face of resistance
- Ability to adopt the identity and have the courage to become a Fathers Champion in their respective organisation, lead discussion and practice initiatives in their respective teams and organisations
- The position and authority to influence strategy and practice
- Commit to attend project work but more importantly undertake actions in between project meetings.

A before and after case file audit designed to test whether the Project brings about practice change will support the project activity.

Communication Plan

A communication plan will be developed and include:

- Presentations at all key forums (conferences, strategic groups, team meetings) across the borough of Croydon throughout 2016, 17 and 18.
- Articles will appear in all newsletters and websites
- Posters will be regularly displayed across the borough
- A conference will be held,
- A Learning and Development Plan will be developed and implemented,
- A set of KPIs will be developed and reported monthly,
- Every opportunity will be used to advance and communicate the project aims and intentions across the Borough (all suggestions welcome)

Project Quality Plan

An initial action plan is attached to this document. Quality of this intervention will be tested via an independent evaluation undertaken by Professor Brid Featherstone as well as through an internal pre and post project audit and through proposed KPIs.

Project Controls

The Project will have the following controls:

- I. The Project has a Project Group (members to be identified)
- II. A set of KPIs will be identified and work towards
- III. The implementation of a 7 Point Plan to Father Engagement is at the heart of this project
- IV. There will be an independent evaluation as well as a pre and post internal audit.
- V. The Project is sponsored and overseen by the CSCB and Senior Management team of the People's Department

The 7 Point Plan

1. Create and adopt a fatherhood strategy for the Universal and Targeted Services, the Children-in-Need Service, Early Help and Family Support Service and other related services, (commissioning, Midwifery, FNP and Health visiting services), with realistic goals and targets. This should include a policy for communicating with fathers and an explicit code of practice for dealing with fathers and male carers. This strategy should be communicated and discussed with all staff and visible for families.

For example; a Paternal Pledge to be written that identifies how fathers can be communicated to and describes the type of service they could expect as well as a wider communication strategy, training and audit across the organisation. The Pledge will need to be added to the Council's website and it must be the basis of an Inclusive Fatherhood Strategy that was written and agreed by the Children's Services Director and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The Children's Services Directors (Paul Greenhalgh and Ian Lewis) must authorise all activity, give those practitioners a specific direction to commit and priorities the project and be seen to link the project to all activities e.g.

- Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence strategy and work with those who abuse e.g. better resourcing to Caring Dads and domestic abuse intervention projects / programmes.
 - CIN Project, Best Start, Gateway and EHM – all projects can support the early identification and support to fathers
 - CSCB – specific priority given to fathers with training etc.
 - Support from voluntary sector
 - Supervisory policy – creating a safe place to talk about fear
 - A Safety Plan procedure for all staff so they feel safe to engage dangerous men which has associated KPIs
2. Identify objectives for engagement with fathers as a whole agency/ies, individual services and individual staff, with these objectives being discussed in supervision and appraisal systems as well as being used for performance management.

We need to identify a set of basic expectations and targets in social work practice that will become a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). example:

- Altering the case file audit document to include questions of father engagement.
 - Father engagement to become a strategic aim for the service for three consecutive years. (The aim to include fathers in practice in all social workers' and other professionals' appraisals for two consecutive years. Whilst in managers' appraisals there needs to be an expectation that discussion on father engagement (resistance, fears and barriers) were regularly undertaken.
3. Refine the existing referral and assessment process and the accompanying paperwork to ensure that fathers' data is collected explicitly, systematically and accurately.

We would need to undertake a significant amount of work at the 'front door'. The EHM and the referral form on EHM/ CRS will need to be redesigned to include questions about the fathers' details. Social workers and administrators will need to be trained to ask all referrers for details of the father. The 6 monthly audit of threshold decisions will need to be redesigned to include questions about father engagement.

4. Use data collection system/s to regularly assess patterns of use in services, and identify areas where fathers are not being included to focus communication and services.

Data generated from the 6 weekly project meeting, the case file audits and the KPIs, will need to be shared across CSC. These KPIs need to be included into the monthly Dashboard regularly discussed throughout the organisation. This will be an important milestone in terms of sustainability as well as an acknowledgement of the importance of father engagement throughout the organisation.

5. Ensure that training is available for staff at every level of the organisation/s in father-inclusive practice. This will ensure that father-inclusive practice becomes embedded in all levels of work and not reliant on the commitment of targeted services or committed individuals within teams.

We need a dedicated training programme for professionals to be trained in father inclusion practice.

The training programme will need to be re-designed with input from a range of others so that all trains e.g. assessment, care planning etc. include father engagement and assessment.

The managers' supervision training must focus on this topic as an example. A fatherhood training programme will need to be included on for example; the annual social work and managers training syllabus, on the induction programme for all new starters and on the Newly Qualified Social Workers Programme as well as other similar programmes for other professions. However we will need to fund this as well as support funding some activities for men specifically. I know there is no money for a perpetrator programme but we could better resource the 'Caring Dads' activities.

6. Establish better pathways and referral processes between generic "preventative" provision including Children's Centres and related services and "crisis" intervention services such as CIN. This could enable vulnerable fathers to be identified and supported earlier.

Colleagues from Early Years Services and from other 'Tier 2' preventative services will need to be offered similar training as above. Whilst managers from these services will need to be encouraged to implement the research aims. But it will need to go wider for example; Midwifery / Early Years services could commission a specific six hour 'Expectant Fathers Programme' which can be run from different children centres across the borough on

Saturdays. Another example; we could ensure that all new birth registrations are undertaken in local children centres. A further example; the Family Nurse Partnership, could train all staff in father engagement, and the Health and CSCB partnership could fully adopted the 'Seven Aims' and we encourage all CSCB members to do the same with associated measures.

7. Ensure appropriate focused and gender specific information is available to give fathers antenatally and subsequently. This information, publicity and communication should state "mother, fathers and other carers.

Colleagues in Early Years Services will need to publish pamphlets on their support to fathers including details of Saturday activities, as well services such as an expectant fathers' courses and another fathers' courses such as '*hit the ground crawling*'. We would need to collect other information and advertise services for men regularly updating the Council's website. The link would need to be regularly sent to social workers and others so staff are aware of services.

Reports

1. An audit & report to establish current practice
2. An annual report to the CSCB and senior management team of Croydon Council
3. We will use the measures below:
 - Measuring the Involvement of Fathers in the Social Work Process Using EHM / CRS numbers of fathers identified at contact and referral.
 - Numbers of men (fathers, step-fathers, and partners) including telephone numbers, addresses and dates of birth recorded on all referrals.
 - Numbers of men (fathers, step-fathers, and partners) included in all assessments.
 - Numbers of men (fathers, step-fathers, partners) invited to and attending Initial and Review Child Protection Conferences.
 - Numbers of men (fathers, step-fathers, partners) invited to and attending Family Group Conferences.
 - Numbers of men (fathers, step-fathers, and partners) invited to CLA reviews.
 - Numbers of children placed with fathers / extended paternal families
4. An audit and end of project report
5. An independent evaluation

Risks and Related Matters

Children and family social work is one of the few institutions to confront the perversities and abuses of traditional gender and power relations and this confrontation has led to understandably defensive practice via 'paternal alienation'. These are entrenched psychological, social and professional behaviours which are challenging to change.

Other more measurable risks as:

- Children Social Care and partners' capacity to implement a further project
- Resource to train staff
- Resource to update CRS and provide regular performance data
- Resource to meaningfully address domestic abuse support
- Resource to provide services for men
- Project lead's own workload capacity to implement the project
- Capacity to undertake this project as services are already severely stretched as are individuals and there is a risk without proper administrative support and project management time that the aims of the project will be lost in the face of competing priorities.
- Further cuts to services and subsequent re-organisations of systems and staff will impact the project outcomes.
- Resistance from staff due to the above two points and because of the complex and emotive nature of the project.
- Regular supervision and safety planning may not be in place consistently
- The slow pace of change
- There is a long-term, (ten to fifteen years), strategic commitment and a realignment of resources to meaningfully address domestic violence.

Other Factors

We would need to integrate, over time, the project into the life of the organisation. We would need to involve everyone in the service. This is essential for sustainability. We would need a highly visible communications strategy and a name that can be associated with the project across the organisation, with its work found across the service and its members (champions / agents of change described above) a common sight, (and sound), across the organisation.

We would need to give the project and its members' authority and permission to others to talk about fathers. This will allow staff across Universal, Targeted & Specialist Services to locate these champions in the context of father inclusion.

Apply learning to all activities in role so for example a manager who is a member of the group and a champion would not sign off assessments unless the father has been contacted, for a social worker it would be to ask mother about the father etc. For the CP coordinator it would be to design safety plans at all ICPCs so that fathers are contacted.

(These 'Other Factors' are also identified as risks above)

Indicators of Implementation

- An increase in fathers telephone details (telephone numbers, date of birth and addresses) recorded
- An increase in fathers identified and assessed.
- An increase in fathers attending meetings and reviews
- An increase in fathers recorded as having parental responsibility
- An increase in contact arrangements for fathers.

- An increase in social workers' considering the father's situation in ongoing planning for the child.
- Increase in fathers attending family Group Conference
- Increase in children diverted from care and placed with fathers or paternal extended families
- A culture of inclusion
- Fathers telling us they have been engaged
- Independent evaluation

Conclusion

This project is designed to better protect and secure better outcomes for children by identifying and intervening with fathers and paternal extended families. It is our intention that this project will become a landmark activity across Croydon.

If you are interested in becoming a fathers' champion, would like training or simply would like more information the email: Engagingfathers@croydon.gov.uk

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