

Early language initiatives to get the dads involved

There are several local initiatives that focus on bringing Dads and male carers more into the picture, to ensure that male carers are just as involved in their child's development as female carers. If you know about any initiatives dedicated specifically to incorporating dads please [email us](#).

Please note that "Dads" extends to any and all male figures in a child's life including granddads, uncles, etc.

[The Ark](#) – Children's Centre

[British Forces overseas](#)

[Cymorth Speech and Language Therapy Team](#) – father's project

[The Daddy Longlegs Project](#) – part of Sandwell's **Time to Talk**

[Hit the Ground Crawling](#) – pilot project in Staffordshire

[Men Behaving Dadly – Sutton project](#)

[Men into early years project](#)

[Sarn Nursery School Dads Days](#)

[Support for Dads projects](#)

[Young Fathers](#) – an initiative from Working With Men

The Ark, a children's centre in North Lowestoft, runs activity sessions for Dads and their children, usually with crafts based around a theme. To address language they use a theme such as making accessories to use with car play. Families made petrol pumps, bridges, garages, fire stations to help build a wider vocabulary and develop imaginative play.

British Forces overseas asked soldiers who are fathers to tape record themselves reading stories so that their children can hear them when they are deployed for four to six months in Iraq or Afghanistan. This was advertised widely and located at a supermarket around payday to encourage participation. A local radio station also helped and burned the recordings onto CD. A recent treasure hunt was organised by the local Homestart service and enticed some dads who were really competitive to show off their navigation skills. They had to pick up clues from various departments such as SLT, army welfare, library before heading off for a prize at the last location. Also an Easter egg and Easter bonnet assembly involved dads in building or creating their child's masterpiece and with dads attending to see the results.

Cymorth SLT team in **Bridgend, Wales** are running a project aimed at promoting involvement of fathers with their children. The project aims to work with the fact that many fathers are in employment and are therefore hard to engage in traditional, daytime post-natal, toddler or parenting programmes and activities. The project is task-focused, to make the purpose of the father's involvement clear. Activities involve an awareness-raising stage where information is provided to fathers by all the major employers of the Bridgend area through road show style events. Information such as leaflets containing suitable activities for dads to do with children of different ages is provided at these stands,. Support was given to the project from three celebrities who provided quotes and pictures to help promote the campaign to fathers. Posters and

leaflets have also been produced, as well as a side-of-bus campaign. The main body of the leaflet gives ideas of ways to play and talk to children of different ages, written with dads specifically in mind.

The project is embedded in policy and practice of major local employers through the leaflet being given out by several of the county's major employers in response to men asking for paternity leave. Also the leaflet was given out as a one-off to large groups of employees via their payslips.

The leaflets are also available for purchase in packs of 50 at a cost of £10 per pack, including postage and packaging. They are available in English and Welsh. To order contact Rebecca Jones on 01656 754 021 or email rebecca.jones@bromotr.wales.nhs.uk

The Daddy Longlegs Project, in association with Murray Hall Community Trust, provides dads groups and dad-friendly playgroups across Sandwell – for dads, granddads, uncles, step-dads and other males making a positive contribution to a family. At weekly, fortnightly or monthly sessions across the area, a variety of services is offered including: baby massage, stay and plays, dad groups, and story time sessions.

In Staffordshire, fathers-to-be are learning childcare skills from new dads and their babies in a peer support programme. The approach is called **'Hit the Ground Crawling'**, and has been developed by the Fatherhood Institute from a scheme in the United States called 'Boot Camp for New Dads'. The programme will inspire and equip men to confidentially engage with their new babies by encouraging them to attend a one-off, three-hour workshop. It has been found that men are more likely to attend a one-off session than sign up for a course. During the session they can discuss their thoughts and concerns with other fathers in an informal, relaxed setting. They will also be shown how to care for a baby by their peers.

East Staffordshire Children's Centre in Burton-on-Trent trialled the scheme in 2008; by 2009 they had five sessions planned. Nicola Ellis, community development worker who facilitated the sessions, explains that they are "led by the fathers, who can talk from their own experience and are often very open, rather than by the professionals, who are there just to guide the topics. It is good for expectant fathers to know that others have similar worries. It can be a big relief for them. They don't feel stupid asking the fathers questions and they cover a wide range of issues, from labour and the birth, to what they should do when the baby cries and how their partner will be after the birth. Some of the fathers have commented that if mums were also included, the conversation would be very different and some felt that the women would take over."

The scheme aims to encourage men to interact with their newborn child in order to help promote bonding and a long-term relationship; as research has shown the huge impact that involved fathers have on the wellbeing of mothers and children. David Bartlett, services manager at the Fatherhood Institute, says "The father-child relationship makes a big difference for the outcomes of children, especially if a father becomes involved early on. It is an influential period because they can then become

bonded and feel comfortable and well-informed in their new role, which sets them up for the future."

The success of the scheme is reliant on agencies, especially midwives, signposting the scheme to expectant fathers. It is popular with mothers who often express dissatisfaction with how services do not engage with men during the pregnancy.

For more information visit www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

(*Nursery World*, 15.01.09)

Men Behaving Dadly - Sutton

The Men Behaving Dadly sessions are operated by Sutton Council and take place every two weeks in a local Sure Start Children's Centre. It is an opportunity for fathers to spend time with their children doing activities like face painting, arts and crafts and football. And the dads have a chance to meet other fathers. Fathers who attend the sessions also have access to training opportunities like accredited first aid courses.

For more information please see the [Sutton borough website](#).

The early years and childcare section at **North Lanarkshire Council** has a new project that has been set up to promote and facilitate the increased participation of men working within childcare and early years education in North Lanarkshire. The '**men into early years and childcare**' project is planning to deliver a campaign of awareness raising and advertising designed to encourage men to consider careers in early years and childcare. For more information visit www.northlan.gov.uk/.

Sarn Nursery School in **Bridgend** runs various days for dads such as 'SMITHS' (Significant Male In The Household), to make fun resources to use with their children when saying rhymes e.g. fluffy sheep for *Baa Baa Black/White Sheep*, *5 little ducks*, *Incy Wincy Spider*. Using resources from the local Library Service, SaLT and LAP Coordinator, breakfast is also provided. Dads are encouraged to play with their children around the nursery as well as make things and show their child that they value what they do in school every day.

Support for Dads project has been set up in Barnsley to challenge gender stereotyping in the area of caring for and working with children and families. It is a joint partnership project between the Pre-School Learning Alliance and Homestart Barnsley. Amongst other things it includes supporting pre-school groups to be more inclusive for dads and male carers, accredited training in childcare and family support, an outreach service including information, advice and guidance on a wide variety of issues, a dad's club and support into employment.

Young Fathers is an initiative run by Working With Men, to help and enable young fathers to be more involved in their child's upbringing. Their work includes the establishment of advice services for fathers and 'expectant fathers' courses, and publishing public information and website materials aiming to support and benefit young fathers and fathers of young children. They are developing the Young Fathers Initiative (YFI) to encompass: direct services and support for young fathers and campaigning on awareness of the specific issues affecting young fathers and the welfare of their families/child. A free advice booklet is available to download for expectant or young fathers. Visit www.young-fathers.org.uk/ or www.workingwithmen.org/youngfathers/.