



Engaging and involving dads and male carers

It can be hard to get the dads and male carers on board. They sometimes won't go near the nursery or playgroup unless absolutely necessary, insisting, "The missus does that". And, of course, some dads and male carers work away from home for long periods and some do not live with their children. Sometimes it's fear of formal settings, not wanting to invade a world full of women or not knowing how to help that holds them back.

The top tips below will help you to start getting your dads on board.

- Many men like to do something, not talk about it – use activities as part of the sessions: interactive games, workshops, puzzles; anything that mixes language and literacy activities with doing something.
- Use a dad-friendly hook – sport might be a good place to start, particularly football, even more so if there is a reward like a football ground tour. Your local club may be able to help. ICT is popular too.
- Speak to dads directly – events labelled for 'parents' tend to only attract mums. Ask for their advice on what support they would like as well as guidance on timings and venues for sessions.
- Use the children – they are often the biggest motivator. Encourage the children to bring their dads along.
- Use the mums – many mums act as gatekeepers for the child's education. Involve the mums in encouraging the dads to get on board.
- Ambassador dads – nurture one or two enthusiastic dads and build up their confidence so they can help develop a larger group.
- Select your timing carefully. Think about when they might be available – early mornings, evenings or weekends. Organise breakfast meetings for dads to give them the opportunity to plan an event that lets them spend some time with their children, have some fun, feel useful and show them that they can get more involved.
- It may take a long time to get going, so be patient. Don't give in or get hung up on numbers. Word of mouth will help once you start to get things going.
- Remember not all dads are the same – their cultures, life histories, experiences, situations and expectations will be varied so try not to lump them all under the same label.
- Read this [case study](#) to find out about how a nursery challenged dads to read a bedtime story with their child.

For more ideas, case studies and resources which might be helpful visit the [early years page](#).