



APPG Fatherhood Meeting Minutes

Date: 12th June 2013

Time: 2pm – 3pm

Location: Wilson Room, Portcullis House

Attendees:

David Lammy, Chair, Dr. Carmen Lau Clayton, Leeds University, Dr. Laura Davies, Leeds University, Jessica Cundy, Barnardos, Shane Ryan, WWM, Sally Mehta, WWM, Owen Thomas, WWM, Hannah Willetts, WWM, Kat Hanna, David Lammy office, Alison Patten, WWM, Chris Facey, WWM, Shawn Wiggins, WWM, Ali Lerech, Young Father, Freddie Gerrens, Young Father, Jerome Henry, Young Dads TV, Adam Moll, Safe Ground, Alan O'Neill, Men's Network, Anood Al Samerai, Southwark Liberal Democrat Group, Bianca Miller, The B Group, Charlotte Weinberg, Safe Ground, Ella Jess Reid, Ghalib Ullah, Parkinson's UK, Gracia McGrath, Chance UK, Helen Wroe, Rosendale CC, Jacqueline Flavell, Birthing Matters, Jai Patel, LEYF, Jan Tallis, School Home Support, June O'Sullivan, LEYF, Kate Bulman, Oakhill STC, Kathy Peto, Early Intervention Service, Labibun Nessa, Westminster Commissioning, Lalita Taylor, Southwick Media, Lesley Dixon, Action for Prisoners Families, Liz Lewinson, WWM, Matthew Allgood, St Saviours, Oliver Chantler, Barnardos, Paul Spinks, Bright Horizons, Robin Van den Hende, DWP, Ross Jones, Families Need Fathers, Sam Brooks, The Literacy Trust, Scott Colfer, Young Dads TV, Seany O'Kane, St Michaels Fellowship, Sophia Dettmer, Southwick Meida, Steve Samuel Inneh, St Georges Hospital, Sue Pettigrew, St Michaels Fellowship, Teresa Williams, Nuffield Foundation, Veronica Wates, Wates Foundation.

1. Introduction, Rt Hon Mr David Lammy

David Lammy formally opened the meeting and welcomed all present. He outlined that the group has only been going for a few years since he set it up after the last general election as a cross party group. David highlighted the difficulties in achieving change in a short time frame, but emphasised his commitment to keeping issues on Fatherhood in the news and to bringing it to the House of Commons.

David thanked Working With Men (WWM) for supporting the APPG.

He informed the group that the purpose of the meeting was to identify which recommendations from the Barnardos report the group should prioritise and try and move forward to affect real change on.

2. Presentation on 'Are We Nearly There Yet Dad?' Report by Barnardos, Jessica Cundy

Jessica presented a summary of the findings from the 'Are We Nearly There Yet Dad?' report which focused on six case studies of young fathers. Each focused on a particular aspect of the journey through fatherhood and highlighted various issues faced by young fathers, including Maternity services, Children's Centres, School support, access to information, housing support and leaving custody.

Jessica highlighted that the report found that what was most needed was a cultural and attitudinal shift, a realisation amongst service providers that young dads are interested in their children and must be engaged as much as mums.

3. Presentation on Following Young Fathers research, Dr. Carmen Lau Clayton and Dr. Laura Davies, Leeds University

Dr. Carmen Lau Clayton and Dr. Laura Davies presented an overview of their current research into young fathers which is funded by the ESRC and entitled 'Following Young Fathers'. It aims to develop understandings of the experiences and support needs of young fathers. Part of the research is to develop a 'Knowledge Bank' on the project website to share good practice among professionals who support young fathers.

There are four strands to the research

- Qualitative Longitudinal methods
- Knowledge to action approach
- Mapping of provision
- Early Start evaluation

The next stages for the research are:

- Understanding what matters and what works
- QL research: time as a resource and tool for policy evaluation
- Practice informed research and research-based practice
- Effective services = Understanding service users needs

4. Q&A

Alan O'Neil, Men's Network - asked Jessica Cundy about the relationships the fathers from the case studies currently had with their children.

Jessica Cundy, confirmed that the case studies were all real stories and that five out of the six still had regular contact with their child, while one was experiencing custody issues at present.

Scott Colfer, Young Dads TV - informed the group that Young Dads TV had secured some funding to help implement the research proposals. He felt that travel costs were a barrier to young dads accessing training and apprenticeships.

Teresa Williams, Nuffield Foundation - informed the group that the Nuffield Foundation is funding research into young fathers, around the antenatal stage and the importance of engagement. She also mentioned the issue of some mothers who exclude fathers and asked the group for their thoughts on this.

David Lammy - reiterated that he has heard this issue many times from young fathers and that some services seem to actively encourage this.

Alan O'Neil - informed the group that he has found this particularly in housing services, where because of the parent's age; they have to be kept apart.

Charlotte Weinberg, Safe Ground - informed the group that currently lack of data sharing amongst services is becoming an issue.

Freddie Gerrens, Young Father – asked if housing had been included in the Barnardos report and asked why as a young father he is not a priority for housing, which means he does not have anywhere to see his child.

Jessica Cundy – confirmed that the report does have recommendations in relation to housing for young fathers.

David Lammy – explained the current political situation where it is currently virtually impossible for a single male to get housing. There is a nationwide shortage of housing and single males are not currently given priority and whether they are a father or not is not taken into consideration. There is a wider political debate around these issues, some people feel the system has been made too easy for mums to get housing.

Freddie Gerrens – asked why when he has his child three days a week he doesn't receive any support from the government, but the child's mum who has him for four days does.

David Lammy – informed the group that he is currently in the process of publishing a report for Ed Miliband about Child Benefit and who gets paid it, which will look at these issues. He said there is not complete agreement within the Labour Party on this issue and some who feel that such change would be a step backwards.

Gracia McGrath, Chance UK – informed the group of Chance UK's work with primary school children, and how they often find that children do not have contact with their father. They find that the fathers are facing housing and financial issues. Gracia would like to see a shift in attitudes so that if the mother is unable to look after a child, the next person considered is the father, which often at the moment it is not, but the wider family.

Ali Lerech, Young Father – informed the group that in his experience, it is not finding work that is difficult but getting back into education, which is what he would prefer, but is finding that this is not possible with the current benefits system.

June O'Sullivan, LEYF – informed the group that LEYF currently offers apprenticeship schemes and has found that travel and child care costs are barriers to young father's engagement. They also have a scheme when young males who are not dads can spend a whole day in a nursery to get an idea of what having a child means. June also feels an important factor is about challenging attitudes to engaging dads and that we don't need to start again and reinvent the wheel.

David Lammy – noted that themes arising from people seem to be housing, finance and child care.

Shane Ryan –WWM - reiterated that the purpose of the meeting is to prioritise the recommendations and that a Steering Group will be set up by WWM to take this forward.

Alan O'Neil – felt that the engagement of men is an important issue.

Anood Al Samerai, Southwark Liberal Democrat Group – feels that housing is the number one issue. There is also an issue in hospitals that after a women gives birth, the dad will be sent home at the end of visiting hours and care is passed solely to the mother and this is how many services view the situation.

Jerome Henry, Young Dads TV – feels that change needs to happen, that childcare costs and the cost of housing is the biggest issue.

David Lammy - explained how he can't promise change tomorrow, it will be a long process, but he is working with people to keep these issues in the news and in front of the Prime Minister. These issues are often part of wider issues of employment, housing and benefits and there are no easy answers and the subject is emotive. It is important that we are less fragmented as a group in order to achieve change.

Seany O'Kane, Safe Ground – informed the group about some research he has conducted on maternity services and found that the midwifery do not currently get any education around engaging fathers and feels this is a barrier to fathers engagement.

Jackie Flavell, Birthing Matters – informed the group that she is a midwife and does agree but feels that being able to engage fathers is not something you can teach, its either a skill you have or haven't got. Also finding that the cuts are having a big impact on midwives and the time they can spend with expectant families and the services, antenatal and expectant fathers groups. Has tried to set up a young fathers group but has been unable to because of funding.

Steve Samuel Inneh, St Georges Hospital – is finding that currently men are not the focus for midwives or in lots of related services, and that there needs to be a mentality shift from women to family care.

David Lammy, acknowledged the strong feelings in the room, and suggested inviting the Children's Minister to the next APPG on Fatherhood.

The proposal was met with unanimous approval from the group.

Kathy Peto, Early Intervention Services – informed the group of some good news from Oxfordshire where there have been reports of good practice in engaging with fathers.

Owen Thomas, WWM – spoke about the need for specialism in this work. There has been a move towards generic services in recent years due to cuts but feels this is not the best way forward. FNP are aimed at young mums, but feels we are losing spaces to debate these issues, there is a need to train people and recognise that services need specific skills.

Labibun Nessa, Westminster Commissioning – Agrees with the groups comments that funding is an issue, and also that we need a shift in attitudes.

Freddie Gerrens – asked David Lammy if he was passionate about the issues young fathers face.

David Lammy – confirmed his interest in these issues and offered the young fathers the opportunity to come and spend a day with him to better understand the way politics works and the challenges in affecting change.

Shane Ryan – Shane confirmed that working towards these issues doesn't end with these meetings. WWM deliver services for young fathers and are committed to affecting change.

David Lammy – David explained that as only one MP out of 649, there is only so much he can do, but that he is committed to taking up these issues and is hopeful the journey will be positive, but that it will take time. He has already seen the good work St Michaels Fellowship do and would like to see more across the country.

Unfortunately there are people that don't share these views and it means that change is slow.

Jessica Cundy – thanked the group for their contributions and pleased to hear that the Barnardos recommendations are being echoed in the group.

Laura Davies, Leeds University – thanked the group for their views and asked if anyone wants to contribute to the research to get in touch.

David Lammy – confirmed he will apply to get the issue of young fathers raised in the House of Commons, but the process can take time. He also confirmed that WWM are setting up a steering group to prioritise the recommendations and if anyone would like to be involved to contact WWM. He also urged people to turn up at their MP surgeries and talk about these issues to make other MP's aware.

Shane Ryan – pleased to hear so many views and encouraged people to contact WWM if they would like to be part of the Steering Group.

Meeting Closed