



## **APPG on Fatherhood Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014

**Time:** 3pm – 4pm

**Location:** Committee Room 17, Cromwell Rd Entrance

### **Attendees:**

David Lammy (Chair), Shane Ryan (Working With Men), Sally Mehta (Working With Men), Owen Thomas (Working With Men), Ashleigh Ryan (Working With Men), Faye Stevenson (Working With Men), Mark Osborn (The Fatherhood Institute), Simon Popay (Royal College of Midwives), Mollie Courtenay (Design Council), Gavin Swann (Croydon Borough Council), Jane Evans (Barnardos), Charlotte Weinberg (Safe Ground), Sue Pettigrew (St Michael's Foundation), Seany O'Kane (St Michael's Foundation), Bren Neal (Leeds University), Alan McMaster (Mellow Dads), Mary Crowley (International Federation for Parenting Education), Ross Jones (Families Need Fathers), Labibun Nessa (Westminster Council), Vloria Hingley (Queen Elizabeth Hospital), Grazia McGrath (Chance UK), Glen Poole (Helping Men), Jonathan Ralling (Barnardos), Debbie Griffin (DWP), Alison Hadley (University of Bedfordshire), Ross Matthewman (Family and Childcare Trust), Baroness Masham (House of Lords), Christine Davis (Royal Holloway University), Craig Hodgson (Dadz Club), Joe Morrisroe (National Literacy Trust), Imogen Atkinson (Office of David Burrowes MP), Mark Brooks (Mankind Initiative), Carl Stark (Family Matters Institute)

### **1. Introduction, Rt Hon Mr David Lammy**

David Lammy formally opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

He then went on to introduce the speakers Simon Popay, Gavin Swann, Mollie Courtenay and Dr Mark Osborn and give a brief overview of their organisations, roles and achievements.

### **2. Presentation on Involving Fathers in Maternity Care, Simon Popay – Policy Advisor, Royal College of Midwives**

Simon provided an introduction to the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) views on how to involve fathers in maternity care and what else needs to be done.

Simon discussed what policy changes have already taken place to aid this, namely:

- Shared parental leave meaning that fathers can now take the time off to attend antenatal appointments.
- The Department of Health released money to improve maternity care, 1/3 of the projects this was given to were aimed at partners to make small changes such as the purchase of reclining chairs so that fathers can stay overnight on post natal care wards.
- Changes to appointment, class times and visiting hours to be better suited to men's work commitments.

He went on to consider what more needs to be done to make maternity services more inclusive:

- To move care from bigger hospitals to the community or people's homes
- To help fathers be seen as a service user rather than a risk to be managed
- To provide more education and training for midwives and maternity staff on how to support partners
- To ensure best practice is shared between services

Simon then went on to highlight some potential limitations that may be faced such as the women's physiological needs being taken into account for the shared parental leave.

To conclude Simon highlighted that they were still looking to engage fathers in maternity care rather than transforming maternity care in terms of parental care. He sees this as the right balance now but may change in the future.

### **3. Presentation on Breaking Down Barriers: Engaging Men in the Child Protection System, Gavin Swann– Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Croydon Council**

Gavin introduced his research into engaging men in the child protection system. He explained that the research took place in a central London borough, finished in 2013 and was completed by social workers. He went on to give an explanation of why he chose this topic. He acknowledged that he held a large number of stereotypes due to the experiences he has witnessed through his years as a social worker and suggested others may have the same feelings which could influence practice.

Gavin explained that through action research they experimented with how to engage fathers. Over 18 months there were significant changes, which led to a 140% increase in the numbers of father identified.

He informed that there are many reasons why social workers do not involve men in child protection work, they include:

- Stereotypes held from personal experiences
- Fear that the organisation may not support
- The fear of attack
- Sexuality is not spoken about in the profession

He then went on to suggest how to include fathers, for example identifying the father as soon as possible and following best practice such as being on time.

He concluded that if a whole system approach is taken to engage men then it provides an opportunity to reduce child death and abuse.

#### **4. Presentation on Engaging Fathers through Design, Mollie Courtenay – Junior Designer, Design Council**

Mollie was looking at how design can help engage dads during the early years of their child's life. She introduced two challenges that the design council has recently run. The first is The Knee High design challenge which works with men in the boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth to address inequalities in the early years. This was a yearlong programme, granting teams funding and support to design new products, services, or environments that enhance the health and wellbeing of children and their families locally. The other challenge was The Dad Challenge, a much smaller programme that gave 5 teams 5 weeks, 5 hundred pounds and mentoring to quickly test and get an idea off the ground. The primary aim was to encourage and enable dads to take a more active role in their child's early years but also to develop the skills and knowledge of people with ideas.

She highlighted a variety of insights found through these schemes such as digging deeper to find out more and allowing your assumptions to be challenged. She also suggested that ideas can be remoulded and experts may need support in seeing a new perspective on how to engage fathers.

Mollie emphasised these points through examples of work completed for the above challenges. For example, she explained that the answers are out there but people need to know that there is someone who believes in them. To show this in reality the example of Anthony was used. He submitted a video to apply and appeared nervous, and shared in his pitch that he had previously been unsuccessful when applying for funds. 5 weeks later he has designed a series of music workshops for dads and their children. She stressed the importance of giving people an opportunity and support as they have the passion, they just need some permission.

To conclude, Mollie stated that design can help engage fathers in early years but it requires more than just designers. It also needs the following:

- People living it
- People passionate about making a change
- People with the influence to be able to imbed and deliver

## **5. Presentation on Safeguarding Children by Working Effectively with Fathers, Dr Mark Osborn – Programme Manager, The Fatherhood Institute**

Mark explained about the Fatherhood Institutes work on safeguarding children. He clarified that the project was working with two local authorities in Wales looking at the whole system and how they can engage fathers. An audit of the policies, procedures and their practice was completed, a report was given and from this an action plan was generated. Alongside this training sessions were provided.

One of these councils completed the process within a year and felt that their practices had changed and requested another audit. The audit looked at whether the father is named with contact details; if he was involved in the core assessment and the case conference, to show a snapshot of the father's engagement through the child protection process, this process is repeated for the second audit.

After the second audit practice had changed significantly. The social workers knew their engagement of fathers improved. Mark felt that this intervention is not complicated and could be rolled out to other local authorities.

## **6. Owen Thomas - Feedback from Young Fathers Steering Group**

Owen provided a brief history of the steering group before giving an update.

From the 2013 meeting those on the steering group decided to focus on data collection. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) provided comprehensive data on the ages of young fathers and that of the mothers under 20 their partner was likely to be as well. It was also found that 75% of young fathers are on the birth certificate but that does leave 25% who are not. The steering group thought it might be interesting to find out the statistics for fathers socio-economic group as currently the parents are together and whoever's is highest is the one that is recorded but the ONS would have to be tasked to do this and there is likely to be a cost.

For young fathers in prison there was not a lot to go on with an estimate of 25% of prisoners are fathers but many do not declare this. The Prisons Inspectorate found that 12% of 15-17 year olds are dads with half of the under 22s being fathers, showing a discrepancy in data.

Alongside this it was felt that departments need to start sharing information much earlier and more freely as young dads do not understand why they have to share the same information several times when they are ruled by one government.

The steering group also looked at the naming of services as a lot of young fathers do not understand what maternity services are but know it's not for them. They looked at names such as antenatal or parental to be more inclusive

## 7. Q&A

**Charlotte Weinberg**, Safe Ground – had concerns about sharing data as the one of the projects her organisation is running keeps hitting hurdles because the data cannot be shared between organisations and the young men don't want to keep sharing it time and time again.

**Craig Hodgson**, Dadz Club – wanted to know how technology was adopted in getting the message out to fathers and getting their opinions.

**Bren Neal**, University of Leeds – continued by asking how do we hear the voices of fathers themselves?

**Baroness Sue Masham**, House of Lords – told an anecdote from her time at Wetherby Young Offenders about a man who feared he would harm his child; she went on to say that these things need to come from the men themselves but the help needs to be there when they ask for it.

**Jonathan Rallings**, Barnardos – followed on from that asking what the numbers would be for mothers in that situation, as he felt many would feel the same despite them having the services and support. He felt it was this kind of prejudice that needs to be challenged.

**Glen Poole**, Helping Men – asked how we frame the question about gender.

**Jonathan Rallings** – wanted to continue building on the momentum gained by contacting the teaching unions and department of education to remove the focus from just early years but to include schools as well.

**Alison Hadley**, University of Bedfordshire – agreed with Jonathan's point and added that parenting should be added to Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and she feels young people would find attachment and the development of the baby's brain interesting. All political parties are interested in making this statutory in PSHE but need encouragement to do so.

**Christine Davis**, Royal Holloway University – through completing a study into child maintenance with the Centre for Social Justice she has found that the amounts being asked are unaffordable and is looking for support in trying to make some changes to this.

**Owen Thomas**, Working With Men – answered the questions on how the thoughts of fathers are collected. He explained that his organisation engages a large number of fathers each year and everything that they bring to the meeting is informed by work they do. Opportunities on Young Dads Council or Young Dads TV are given to those who feel most confident and for those who are not they are worked with closely so their stories are heard.

**Shane Ryan**, Working With Men - added that he appeared on TV with a young father this Father's Day and he got to share his story in a very positive piece. Shane suggested that if you look for this kind of work you will see it is happening.

**Craig Hodgson** – offered his social media platforms as a further way of communicating with fathers.

**Bren Neal** – agreed with Shane but thought more visibility on a political level would help.

**David Lammy** – explained that this is a new APPG which is growing. He feels it is more important that the sector understands it exists first and then it can begin to shift institutions which takes time.

**Mark Osborn**, Fatherhood Institute – answered the question about the young father anxious about his behaviour by explaining the research on fathers and hormonal changes. He stated that when a father is used to being with his child his testosterone levels drop whereas they increase if he is not used to spending time with the baby, showing that being involved from the beginning can create physical change.

**David Lammy** – concluded that he is always happy to write on behalf of the APPG to engage agencies and make things happen. He agreed to contact the prisons minister to help with data collection and sharing and also to the secretary state of education to try and push SRE further. He explained that we are going into an election year so meeting may become difficult particularly for the first six months but after the election we can reconvene and continue pushing for change.

**Meeting Closed**