

Father Inclusive – One Minute Guide

“Where fathers are positively involved with their children, even when parents are separated, children benefit socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.”

Allen & Daley 2007

Why the need for Father Inclusive Practice?

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel report [“The Myth of Invisible Men”](#) findings:

The opportunity for offering support to men who might need it in their role as fathers, for early identification of both parental and children’s vulnerabilities, and potential risks that these indicate are not maximised.



Safeguarding practice with fathers of young children is something of a paradox. Despite evidence suggesting some men are very dangerous, service design and practice tends to render fathers invisible and generally ‘out of sight’.

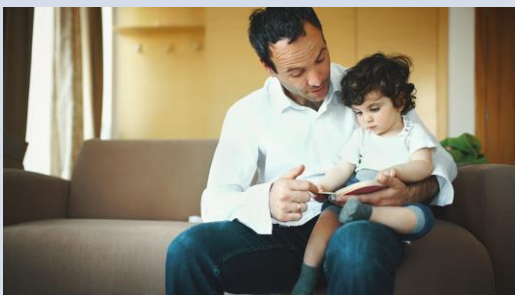


Some of the men want to remain hidden, unassessed, and unengaged.



What does Father Inclusive relationship based practice look like?

- Recognises the diverse circumstances, strengths, and interests of fathers.
- Takes a positive approach to the diversity of men, their needs, and expectations.
- Encourages men and service providers to openly celebrate and value fathering.



Barriers to Father Inclusive Practice



- Negative socially constructed images of men
- Practitioners’ own childhood experiences of abuse and violence
- Practitioner’s experiences of fathering
- Safety fears
- Practitioners feel constrained by time demands
- Missing contact details for fathers
- Mothers will often ‘gate-keep’ the father’s identity

Father Inclusive Practice Tips

- Include fathers from the outset.
- Recognise the value of fathers to children.
- Be open minded. Gain and consider all parents perspectives, giving due weight equally.
- Understand the paternal network through using genograms.
- Ensure you assess mothers and fathers in terms of risk and resource, while acknowledging children can never be assessed as protective factors for mothers or fathers.
- When working with fathers from black and minority ethnic groups, be culturally curious and talk with the father about what it means to be a father from their cultural perspective.
- Consider how unconscious bias may be influencing your own and your organisation's engagement with fathers.
- Recognise the importance of the father in a child's life, even when there is no father current involved with the family. This will create an opportunity to talk to children about their understanding of their paternal identity and how the absence of the father has affected the family.
- Be prepared to engage with men and support them to develop their parenting skills and address any addictions, mental health problems or violence, and understand any root causes of these behaviours.
- Safety planning should consider the family safety and the practitioners. Raise any issues with your line manager and complete sector specific risk assessments, for example [Safe Lives: Identifying the risk victims face](#).

Supporting Fathers with Child Centred Fathering

Child Development – Indicate to fathers that children go through a number of stages as they grow up. Help fathers appreciate the developmental context of their children's behaviour and reactions.

Positive engagement such as care and play – Support fathers to understand the value of play for children. Play is a way children work through problems, have fun, and engage adults around them. Play also provides a fantastic opportunity for fathers to connect with their children and have their children feel listened to and understood. Encourage fathers to set aside some time where they are committed to playing with their child.

Warmth and responsiveness, including emotional support – Encourage fathers to understand the importance of praise. Praise is effective in encouraging children (especially older children) to relate to how they feel about who they are and to their achievements. Praise also encourages positive self-esteem and self-worth.

Discipline with love and positive parenting – All children need positive guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits. Fathers should remind children of the consequences of their actions and positively acknowledge desirable behaviour. Fathers who discipline in a calm and fair manner show love for their children.

Respect the other parent of your child – Parents who respect each other and demonstrate mutual respect to their children, provide a secure environment for them.