



Engaging fathers

Involving parents, raising achievement

Thanks to

- Members of the DfES Advisory Group on Fathers' Engagement with their Children's Learning and Education for their hard work and commitment to this project.
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- **Rebecca Goldman** – is a researcher for DfES and carried out her research into the engagement of fathers in children's learning whilst on secondment with the National Family and Parenting Institute.

If you have any queries or thoughts about the advice in this booklet please let us know. Contact Carolyn Unsted at parents.website@dfes.gsi.gov.uk.

What is this booklet?

This booklet is a summary of research and information available on the subject of engaging fathers in their children's learning. You can find much more on  www.teachernet.gov.uk/workingwithparents, including strategies and materials to support school self-review and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes. Look for the TeacherNet icon. The booklet has been designed to be photocopied.

Additionally, the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) www.nfpi.org has been carrying out research on fathers' involvement in their children's learning, including case studies of effective practice by schools and other learning providers. The research report should be published by the NFPI in autumn 2004.

"Some people say like father like son. But I think they are wrong. Like father like daughter. I'm exactly like my Dad. Not in looks. In personality. We both like fishing and picnics."

Emma (Year 6).

From the Fathers Day 2003 'Message to my Dad' competition organised by Fathers Direct for the DfES.

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Section 1

Rationale

A successful home-school relationship can not only make a real difference for groups of underachieving pupils and their families, but can be a key element in making a school stronger and more effective.

Research evidence and inspection data show that schools that have learned to work well with parents can expect significant, consistent and lasting benefits:

- increased parental participation in, and support for, the life of the school
- a greater willingness for parents and schools to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage
- improved levels of achievement – parents' active encouragement and support for children's learning produce tangible academic benefits that last throughout a child's school career
- more positive pupil attitudes and behaviour.

Developed from DfES Materials for Schools – Involving parents, raising achievement.

Is it enough to just engage with one parent – usually the mother? Research shows that both fathers and mothers impact on their children's development – sometimes in similar, and sometimes in quite different, ways. The *combined* influence of fathers and mothers is also important. Taking action to include both parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning can make a significant and positive difference to children's achievements, motivation and self-esteem.

Involving fathers can also benefit the fathers themselves, and their families. In fact, as the research summarised in this booklet shows, engaging fathers in their children's education can make a significant difference to the lives of both child and father well beyond the years of school-based learning.

Currently there is considerably lower participation by fathers than by mothers in schools and in family learning initiatives. The reasons are many and complex – and some are outlined later in this booklet. Fathers tend to have greater involvement in learning activities outside school such as supporting secondary age children’s homework, leisure activities and outings with educational benefits. As you will see, this is sometimes a good starting point for encouraging further involvement in their children’s learning.

It has long been believed that developing effective father-school relationships will not be easy, and will require hard work and persistence. In fact, it is only recently that teachers have begun to identify and record effective strategies for reaching out to fathers, both at home and in their communities. When these are thoughtfully and consistently implemented, fathers sometimes prove surprisingly easy to engage. However, shaping and implementing a coherent strategy for involving fathers certainly needs time and commitment at the outset. Above all it needs an informed approach that recognises the significance of the potential outcomes for children, fathers and families.

You may already be implementing some of the ideas described in this booklet and some of the case study materials may be familiar to you, too. But here is the important question: do you have a *whole school* approach and *cohesive framework* for developing effective father-school relationships as part of a *parental involvement* or *home-school strategy*? This is an essential building block in successful practice with fathers (as with mothers) and this booklet will help you think about and develop this.

“Dad, you are my best friend and always will be.”

Ben (Year 5).

From the Fathers Day 2003 ‘Message to my Dad’ competition organised by Fathers Direct for the DfES.

When we use the word ‘father’ in this booklet – what do we mean?

First and foremost we mean the person whom the child or young person regards as ‘the other person who made me’ – whether or not he is resident with the child. A father’s approval and support have a special resonance for children and young people. We do recognise, however, the current diversity of arrangements for looking after and bringing up children and young people. **Many of the ideas in this booklet are applicable to other individuals who have the father role: stepfathers, adoptive fathers and foster fathers. Older brothers, uncles, grandfathers, mentors and male carers may also be the ‘lead adult male’ in a child’s or young person’s life.** These father figures have a powerful influence on children and young people, and engaging productively with them is important. For many families they may be a key starting point for your involvement programmes.

In many cases where the father is non-resident because of a breakdown in the relationship with the mother, it will be perfectly proper and safe for the father to have contact with his children through involvement with the school, but not in every case. Schools' involvement with non-resident fathers needs to be handled carefully and in line with relevant national and local guidance. Working collaboratively with the mother is important for the child and the father. If there are barriers to the father's involvement such as contact, legal or other serious issues the mother will hold information about this. There may be times when there are no such barriers but the mother is reluctant for the father to be involved. In such situations do talk to the child and the father to find out more. Do remember that these are extremely sensitive issues that need to be handled with great care, especially with very young children.





Key research findings

The following section has drawn heavily from an extensive review of research literature and detailed mapping of initiatives in England related to fathers' involvement in children's education undertaken in 2003-04 by the National Family and Parenting Institute (Rebecca Goldman). Further details can be found at the end of the booklet.

What are the gains for children of engaging fathers?

- Positive father involvement in their children's learning is associated with better educational, social and emotional outcomes for children, including:
 - better examination results
 - better school attendance and behaviour
 - less criminality
 - higher quality of later relationships
 - better mental health.

These associations are independent of and additional to those related to the involvement of mothers. Both mother and father involvement are important for children and one is not a substitute for the other.

Why do fathers get involved in their children's learning?

- In response to their children's interest, encouragement and direct invitations to get involved.
- A desire to build stronger relationships with their children.
- A belief that helping their children to learn is important for their children's success (even when their own school experience was poor) and a strong desire for their children to do better than they did.

Which fathers are more likely to get involved?

Fathers are more likely to be involved in schools and in children's learning if:

- the child's mother is involved in the child's learning and education
- the father is resident with the child
- there are good relations between the father and the mother, especially in situations where the father is non-resident
- the school welcomes and reaches out to fathers
- there has been earlier (postnatal/pre-school/primary school) involvement by the father
- the father and the mother have higher qualification levels
- the child is in primary school rather than secondary school (which also holds for mothers' involvement in education)
- the father comprises a 'father only household' (lone father).

What sort of programme attracts fathers?

- Programmes where school staff welcome fathers and feel comfortable about their inclusion.
- Programmes where schools are persistent and creative in recruiting and involving fathers.
- Programmes and activities where local fathers have been consulted on factors such as content, design, publicity, recruitment, timing and venue.
- Well planned programmes and activities built around dynamic and active learning styles with not too much discussion.
- Programmes and activities explicitly targeted at fathers – events labelled for 'parents' tend to attract predominantly mothers because 'parent' is often perceived as 'mother'.
- Programmes built around father-child activities ('family learning'). These are not necessarily father-son activities although this may be particularly relevant for some children.
- Fathers get more involved in wider family learning programmes than in Family Language, Literacy and Numeracy (FLLN) programmes – particularly when courses are shorter and run outside working hours. Successful programmes often focus on learning or experiences shared with children in areas as diverse as ICT, arts and crafts, music, drama, technology, sports and cookery. Literacy activities can be successful when focused on literature appealing to men, and perhaps also linking to internet technology and sport, for example. Fathers often respond well to opportunities to share job-related expertise with children and other parents. Efforts are being made to develop more father-friendly programmes. There is also flexibility in course design and format and schools would be very welcome to experiment with new approaches to engage more fathers. LEAs and LSC family learning teams would be pleased to work with schools to develop programmes with and for fathers.

- Some schools have developed successful programmes for involving fathers that are not based on the traditional models of activity based family learning. Examples include:
 - engagement with individual fathers about a specific child's learning and behaviour
 - Open House events for fathers, Dads into School days, Dads Breakfasts, Dads Lunches and 'celebrate Fathers Day' evenings
 - making use of fathers' specific skills to support work in the classroom and also to support children in a mentoring capacity
 - father-support networks and adult learning programmes for fathers as part of an 'extended school' programme.

The following case study illustrates such an approach.

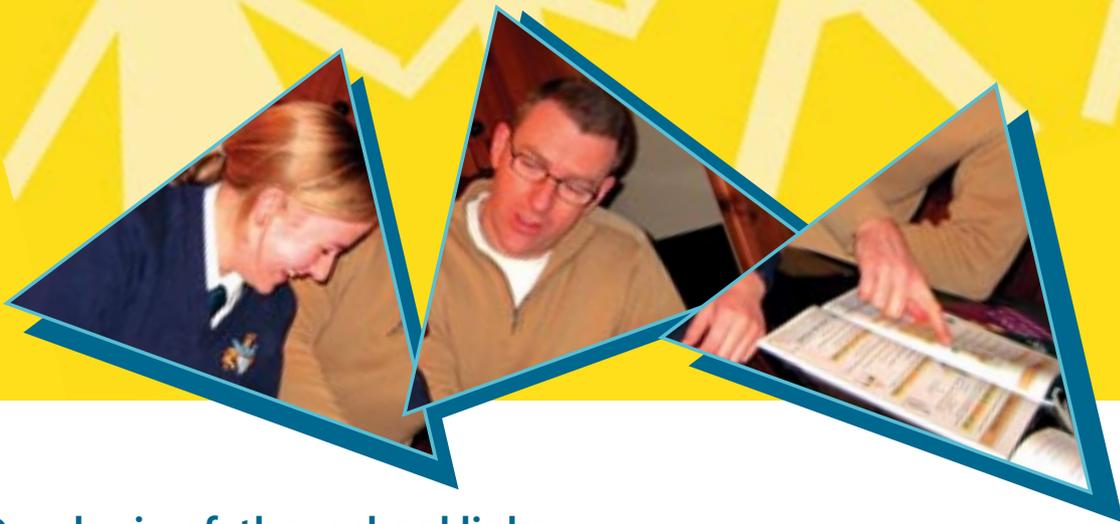
An inner city primary school held a Bring a Dad to School Day which involved over 100 adult men and 430 children (two thirds of the school population). The event ran all day with sessions such as 'Dads at Work', reading and story telling, science workshops, maths games with prizes, outdoor physical games, music, fathers' seminar and lunch with the children. Teachers were released from class to support the activities and where learning activities were modelled, materials were used that the fathers or male carers could later use at home.

Some fathers were able to negotiate time off work with their employer as paid leave. Each participating father received a certificate (mentioned in supporting publicity), which they were able to show employers if they had time off work.

The fathers really enjoyed the day and wanted another one the next year. Children said that they were proud and happy about seeing their fathers in school and valued the time spent with them. Fathers also stated that they were more aware of their importance in their children's lives and the importance of engaging in their children's learning.

Organisers felt that it was important to work in ways that did not make fathers defensive and to explore teachers' perceptions and judgements of men as part of the process of engaging with fathers.

Re: Goldman, R. (forthcoming in autumn 2004) *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute – where the full case study of this school (and a range of other projects) will be found.



Section 3

Developing father-school links

The development of an effective strategy for engaging fathers in their children's learning sits best within a **home-school policy** that sets the overall framework for engaging both mothers and fathers in their child's learning.

An essential part of the process involves recognising that mothers and fathers make contributions to their children's lives that are both distinct and complementary. They may have differing perceptions of the roles they can and should play in supporting their children's learning and research shows that different approaches are needed to engage mothers and fathers over the long term. Experience shows that 'one size fits all' approaches to engaging fathers and mothers do not work well and that differences should be articulated, celebrated and constructively built upon. Your home-school policy will be more successful if it contains sections identifying differentiated approaches to engaging fathers and mothers. This may involve additional work for you in the short term but this will be more than offset by significant gains in the long term.

What would an effective school look like?

There is no single model for a school to adopt to be successful in engaging fathers. The needs of a school and its community are diverse and complex. However, research and existing effective practice do identify a series of characteristics that we would ask you to reflect on as you consider how you can build successfully on your existing practice:

Leadership and management

- An explicit and shared recognition by all staff and governors that engaging effectively with fathers will make a significant difference to children's and young people's learning.
- High quality leadership from the head teacher and senior staff that exemplifies the policy and practices necessary for engaging successfully with fathers.
- Explicit policies and practices targeted on engaging fathers and mothers in the context of a clear, transparent home-school policy.
- A whole team approach to engaging with fathers that is built on an evidence-based approach to improvement and programme design.
- A recognition that successful engagement with fathers will take time, creativity, persistence and effort – particularly at the outset.
- A detailed and regularly updated database on fathers – particularly non-resident fathers – that identifies contact information, interests, engagements with the school and what they may be able to offer to the school.

School environment

- A school environment that sends out positive messages about the engagement of fathers with their children and their lives at school.

Communication

- A clear and transparent strategy for communicating with fathers, mothers, pupils and the community.
- A variety of methods that focus on direct one to one communication with fathers e.g. telephone, text messaging, e-mailing, paper communications and meetings.
- High levels of consultation and engagement with fathers that systematically inform the design and implementation of support programmes and activities.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- Debate and discussion between all staff about the attitudes and skills required to work effectively with fathers (and mothers).
- Systematic CPD programmes for all staff focused on developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to support effective involvement of fathers (and mothers).
- Engagement with other schools through local and national networks to both identify and share existing practice and also collaborate in providing activities and training for staff and fathers.

Resources

- The creative use of resources (including staff and time) to target activities on fathers, families and children with greatest levels of need.
- Making use of other fathers or other men linked with the school to act as trusted contacts, mentors or trainers.

Programmes

- Programmes targeted at particular families as a result of the needs of the children.
- Programmes that are 'sold' to fathers as benefiting their children and not themselves.
- Programmes that give fathers opportunities to find out more about lifelong learning for their children and themselves – this may involve links with local colleges and community training centres, libraries and museums.
- Programmes with sufficient flexibility in timing to meet the varying needs of fathers.

Community links

- A willingness to engage constructively with the local community in order to work with all fathers but particularly those who are difficult to reach or non-resident.
- Strategies for the effective engagement of fathers (and mothers) could be identified as central elements of specialist and leading edge schools' community programmes.

"My Dad loves and cares for me, yet he still has time to watch football."

Emma (Year 3).

From the Fathers Day 2003 'Message to my Dad' competition organised by Fathers Direct for the DfES.

First steps in developing a strategy for engaging fathers

An **audit of your current work** to engage fathers in their children's learning can provide the basis for improving your work in this area and for refining your home-school policy. A similar audit of your work to engage mothers might also be undertaken to both reassure mothers about the sudden emphasis on the needs of fathers and identify potential improvements to your existing policy and practice.

Once the audit has been completed and analysed you should have clear answers to the question:

Where are we now?

The next step will be for you to use this information to think about how you want to improve your father-school links and answer the question:

Where do we want to be?

When you know where you are and where you want to be, you can then answer the question:

How do we get there?

This is best done through the mechanism of your existing home-school policy. An explicit strategy and activities for improving the engagement of fathers will demonstrate your commitment to this work as a central element of the school's work and its continuing improvement. It then gives you a clear framework for deciding:

Who does what?

And identifying the support and training required to ensure its success.

Getting started on the audit

To keep everyone involved **explain the need to undertake such an audit**. This is best done in terms of:

- recognising the importance of fathers in their children's lives alongside mothers
- respecting common differences between fathers and mothers and recognising the need to find out about their differing priorities and ways of doing things
- establishing a baseline for evaluation and planning purposes
- using outcomes to make a positive difference to the children in the school.

“When I am stuck with my homework you help me with it if I need it. When I am being bullied you help me in any way you can.”

James (Year 6).

From the Fathers Day 2003 ‘Message to my Dad’ competition organised by Fathers Direct for the DfES.

What should the audit look like?

The audit should involve all staff and governors as well as pupils, mothers and fathers. Gathering these differing perspectives is important in obtaining **reliable information** from your audit. When you are undertaking the audit there are many types of questions you should be asking of yourself and possibly others. You need to be open and frank.

The following sections illustrate key areas to explore as part of the audit process.

The role of fathers in your school’s learning community

- What roles do fathers already play in their children’s learning? For example:
 - do they support their children’s learning at home e.g. play, reading, ICT, helping with homework, trips or visits?
 - do they show a strong interest and talk to their children about their work at school?
 - do they look at homework diaries or journals?
 - do they support their children directly at school e.g. journeys to school, sports events, parents meetings, curriculum events, review meetings?
 - do they take part in family learning programmes?
 - do they directly help the school in some way?
 - do fathers join adult learning or family learning for themselves as well as for their children?
- What roles do fathers want to play and what do their children want?
- What things get in the way of fathers supporting their children’s learning?
- Are there any concerns or issues related to fathers engaging more in their children’s learning? How can they be addressed?

What fathers do and think

- What is the diversity of family roles and attitudes to engagement amongst fathers? You may wish to consider impact of differing local cultures, for example.
- Are there specific groups of fathers you wish to ‘target’ as part of your strategy for increasing involvement e.g. fathers of children with difficulties, fathers facing barriers to involvement, fathers from specific ethnic groups?
- Do you know where fathers can be found in your community? For example, workplaces, pubs, sports centres, mosques and other places of worship.

What teachers and other staff do and think

- What are the attitudes of teachers and other staff towards working with fathers?
- How skilled are teachers and other staff in working with fathers and how much professional development have they received in this area?
- Do you seek the help of the local community and partner organisations (e.g. other schools, the LEA, local colleges, libraries, sports centres and clubs, local museums and voluntary/community/religious organisations) in engaging fathers and particularly those who are difficult to engage?

Managing your work with fathers

- Are you clear about **why** you want to involve fathers to support their children to support school? How does it relate to school improvement objectives and targets?
- Does the work you do now provide fathers with the learning opportunities they want or need?
- Does the work you do now with fathers reflect a strategic approach to engaging with parents as a whole?
- Are there significant discrepancies between what the school thinks it's doing and what fathers and mothers believe it's doing? Do you know?
- What small steps could be taken to make changes that are both realistic and sustainable?

Audit resources available for you to use and possibly amend according to your needs are to be found on the **TeacherNet** website.

There are also well-established organisations that can provide you with the tools and back-up resources to undertake this kind of audit. You can find further details of such organisations in the resources section at the end of this booklet and also on the **TeacherNet** website.

A detailed process for evaluating the quality of home-school links and developing an overall home-school policy is described in *DfES Materials for Schools – Involving parents, raising achievement*. This can be easily amended to give you a framework for the development of a policy for the engagement of fathers. You will find details on the **TeacherNet** website.



Section 4

Taking action to involve fathers

In this section we look at some practical ideas and opportunities for making father-school links stronger, building on what you already do in your school. They are grouped within a framework, which we hope will help you develop more effective links with fathers as part of your overall home-school policy. For more ideas, go to www.teachernet.gov.uk as well as the websites listed at the end of the booklet. You can also let fathers know about www.parentcentre.gov.uk, a website designed for both fathers and mothers to help them help their children learn.



“Dear Dad, I only see you once a week ... Some small things I ask of you. Please come to my school plays and come to parents’ evening to see how I’m getting on.”

Charlotte (Year 6).

From the Fathers Day 2003 ‘Message to my Dad’ competition organised by Fathers Direct for the DfES.

Making it happen – some key principles

- The leadership of the headteacher is key in demonstrating a genuine commitment to the policy, modelling effective relationships with fathers and mothers and influencing the attitudes and behaviours of school staff.
- Continuously discuss and reflect on the attitudes and concerns of staff, fathers, mothers and pupils.
- Have a clear and transparent policy about fathers’ involvement that clearly explains why involving fathers is so important for the children in your school.
- Be prepared to demonstrate commitment, creativity, perseverance and flexibility over the long term – making a sustainable difference will take time.
- Recognise that one model of practice is not sufficient to involve all fathers fully in their children’s learning.

- Ask the children/young people in your school about how their dads help with their learning and what they want from their dads.
- Make fathers welcome and appreciated. Develop one to one relationships (e.g. in the school playground) and consult with them regularly about issues and how they can be best involved in their children's learning. Work to convince them that school is not 'hostile territory' and that their involvement will make a huge difference to their children.
- Try to include non-resident fathers when it is possible and safe.
- Include in all your programmes other men who have the father role: step fathers, adoptive fathers, foster fathers and those who are the 'lead male adult' in many children's lives such as uncles, grandfathers and male carers.
- Talk to mothers about the role of fathers and listen to concerns and issues they raise. Work to gain acceptance amongst mothers that it is usually safe and desirable to have high levels of father involvement because it is good for their children. You will need to tread sensitively at first as a minority of mothers will have had traumatic experiences of men and fathers e.g. domestic violence, child abuse, other crime.
- Convince fathers that they are welcome, appreciated, trusted and have much to offer to their children and the school – this is at the heart of getting fathers involved in their children's learning.

A good understanding of the **outcomes of research into barriers to fathers' involvement** will enable you to design and implement programmes that will both engage and maintain the involvement of fathers in their children's learning and the life of the school. The following section outlines some key ideas drawn from research into effective school-based work in engaging fathers and complements the research summary on pages 5 to 7.

Making it happen – some key ideas

- Continuously emphasise to fathers (and mothers) how important fathers are to their children and their learning. Provide lots of encouragement to fathers to get involved and work sensitively to give them confidence in their parenting role.
- Make school and children's learning more welcoming to men – they are often seen by fathers as 'women's spaces' and 'women's work'. Consult local fathers about ways in which the school environment could be made to look and feel more welcoming to men and fathers.
- Ensure that activities are 'sold' to fathers on the basis of the help it will give to their children and not themselves. Fathers respond very positively to direct invitations from their children (no matter at what age!).

The following case study shows how one project engaged the fathers of children aged 7-13 in a Sunday morning Family Learning cookery session.

The cookery session was run for fathers and their children as a pilot for a longer course. The session aimed to create shared learning and communication opportunities for fathers and children. The idea for the session came from one of the fathers who was also involved in other father-child activities run by an LEA Families project.

Publicity (fliers and posters) was distributed through local schools and local fathers' groups. Fathers involved in other fathers' activities were approached personally. The emphasis was on asking children to 'make sure your dad comes along and brings you with him!'

The activity was run in a local secondary school and the fathers and their children cooked a Sunday lunch together in a three-hour session. An LEA father worker and two students on a local basic skills course who enjoyed cooking and could teach cooking skills to the fathers and the children facilitated the event.

The event achieved many things – building bonds between fathers and their children, teaching new skills and enthusing the fathers to engage in cooking at home and to attend a longer cookery course for fathers and children. The activity tended to attract daughters rather than sons. Participants felt that what made the event successful was:

- having a practical and task-orientated activity
- making it fun
- recruiting fathers by appealing to their children
- starting with a one-off session to get fathers interested without the commitment of a longer course.

Re: Goldman, R. (forthcoming in autumn 2004) *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute – where the full case study of this school (and a range of other projects) will be found.

- Get school staff onside by giving them opportunities to reflect on their attitudes towards greater engagement with fathers. Create regular opportunities for them to learn about current research findings and effective practice in other schools.
- Design activities and programmes for fathers that are factual, active and hands-on with not too much discussion. Remember not to perpetuate stereotypes or make assumptions about what will interest fathers – it's as likely to be something to do with music as it is with cars!

A number of secondary and primary schools and community groups in the Midlands and North of England have been involved in a series of design and technology family learning workshops. The workshops are designed and led by an external consultant to enable fathers, mothers and their children (ages 3 to 16) to collaborate in either one-off or multiple workshops. The ninety-minute workshops are on themes such as robot-making, motorised model-making and designing fairground attractions. Many fathers, grandfathers and other male carers attend. They comment positively on the attraction of the practical, 'hands on' nature of the workshops and the high quality resources. The workshops are funded from a variety of sources including local regeneration strategy budgets.

At the end of the programme participants have commented on the positive differences made to their confidence, skills and understanding of the school and its curriculum. They value the quality time with their children and what they have learned about their children's learning and abilities. The children comment on the exciting activities and on the value of having quality time with their families. This boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

Re: Goldman, R. (forthcoming in autumn 2004) *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute – where the full case study of this school (and a range of other projects) will be found.

- Consult fathers about what they might be able to offer to the school and their particular interests. Ask them about the best times for events and try to be as flexible as you can. Start slowly with one-off fun events and gradually build up from there.
- Help fathers to see that learning in schools has changed for the better by giving them hands-on opportunities to find out about what their child is learning.



Two primary schools in the North East of England, together with a regional voluntary organisation and the Workers Education Association, ran a basic skills computer course for fathers and their children in the computer suite of one of the schools. The schools were interested in involving more fathers, especially as most of the teachers were female. It was hoped that this would enable fathers to feel more comfortable with school and about engaging with the teachers. It was also hoped that this would allow fathers to develop ICT skills, build personal self-esteem and confidence and also encourage the children (especially boys) by providing male role models. The course lasted ten weeks and incorporated both learning with the fathers on their own and joint learning with their children. The course was run in partnership with the LEA's Community Education Department.

At the end of the course the fathers stated that they valued a regular opportunity to spend time with their child, had learned new skills, understood their child's abilities better and had gained confidence to go into school and approach teachers. The children particularly stressed their pride and pleasure at their father coming into school and spending time with them. They now recognised their fathers' abilities and communication with them had improved.

Re: Goldman, R. (forthcoming in autumn 2004) *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice*. London: National Family and Parenting Institute – where the full case study of this school (and a range of other projects) will be found.

- Give particular attention to the needs of non-resident fathers. Make sure that they regularly receive news about their child (especially good news), information about their progress and what's happening at school.
- Be flexible and creative in developing communication links with fathers. They particularly value direct telephone access to a 'link person' whom they know and trust. Use the terms 'father' and 'mother' in communications to parents taking care to reassure mothers about this approach.
- Active engagement with local community and religious groups may help when working with fathers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

More detail about the research findings on what works is contained in an annex to this booklet, which can be found on **TeacherNet**.





Establishing a working partnership with the LEA

Some of the case studies in the booklet exemplify the ways in which LEAs can work in partnership with schools to engage fathers with their children's learning. The following sections identify a range of questions that you might want to ask your LEA in order to identify how they can best support your work with fathers. It is not a definitive list but may help you in having a constructive dialogue with your LEA.

Leadership and management

- What is the LEA already doing to support the effective engagement of fathers and mothers in their children's education?
- Does the LEA have a strategy for supporting schools in engaging fathers and mothers in their children's education?
- Does the LEA have a strategy for engaging fathers and mothers in their own and their children's education?
- Does the LEA have a Parental Partnership Service? Does the work of the service encompass engaging all fathers (and mothers) in their children's education? If it does, how can it best support your development programme?
- Are there people within the LEA with a lead responsibility for establishing effective links between the community and education providers such as schools, who may be able to facilitate your programmes?
- Does the LEA have an Adult Learning Plan or a Family Learning Strategy outlining plans for providing learning opportunities for men and women, fathers and mothers etc.
- Does the LEA consult with the schools about proposed family learning programmes and are there opportunities to develop courses together with fathers.

Communication

- Does the LEA have a strategy for effectively communicating with fathers and mothers about their children's education?
- What is the role of the Parent Governor Representatives in the LEA? Can they play a role in supporting you in engaging with fathers more effectively?
- Are there existing forums that you can access to seek the views of fathers about ways of engaging with their children's education?
- Are there ways in which the LEA can support you in developing electronic communication routes with fathers? Does the LEA have an intranet that enables schools to communicate with local learning centres, libraries and colleges, for example?

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- Is the LEA (or other services within the local authority) able to provide training programmes or consultancy support to enable teachers and other staff to improve their skills in working with fathers (and mothers)?
- Does the LEA (or other services within the local authority) have a directory or database that gives details of local/national training programmes or providers that could support your CPD programme for teachers and other staff?

Programmes

- What national parental involvement programmes does the LEA (or local LSC or Connexions) already support or facilitate that are focused on engaging fathers in their children's education? For example *Share* and *Active Dads*, which are from the voluntary organisation *ContinYou* and which many LEAs use.
- What LEA or local Learning and Skills Council support is there for developing programmes?
- Does the LEA have a directory or database that gives details of local or national programmes that could support your strategy for engaging fathers?
- Does the LEA have information about effective practice in engaging fathers developed in local schools or colleges?
- Can the LEA facilitate contacts with other teams in the local authority or with local/national voluntary organisations that can support your work?
- Can the LEA facilitate contacts with Higher Education Institutions so that you can be well informed about the latest research into engaging fathers (and mothers) with children's learning? This may give you access to the latest international research as well.
- Is the LEA able to support your work through co-ordinated access to local/national funding streams linked to school improvement, community regeneration or lifelong learning, for example?

Resources

- Does the LEA have a directory or database that gives details of available resources that could support your strategy for engaging fathers?
- Is the LEA able to support you directly in identifying, engaging and training other fathers or other men linked with the school to act as trusted contacts, mentors or trainers? Is the LEA able to put you in contact with local or national organisations that can help you in developing such programmes?
- Can the LEA provide you with any staff time to help you with your engagement of fathers? Does the LEA already employ a fathers worker? Some successful projects involve joint working by a school and the LEA.
- Can the LEA's or ILSC's adult or family learning co-ordinator help you?

Community links

- Can the LEA help you access networks that will enable you to communicate with local community and religious leaders about engaging fathers?
- Can the LEA (and local Learning and Skills Council) help you access networks that will enable you to talk to employers and local training providers about flexible release time for fathers?
- Can the LEA help you access networks that will enable you to establish appropriate links with non-resident fathers?

Don't forget that ...

You can find information about ways to engage fathers in their children's learning by going to www.teachernet.gov.uk as well as the websites listed at the end of the booklet. You can also let fathers know about www.parentcentre.gov.uk, a website designed for both fathers and mothers to help them help their children learn.

and also ...

Look out for the NFPI report (due in autumn 2004) by checking the NFPI website on www.nfpi.org.



Some useful websites

www.parentcentre.gov.uk
www.parentsonline.gov.uk
www.parentalk.co.uk
www.teachernet.gov.uk/workingwithparents
www.dfes.gov.uk/playingforsuccess
www.dfes.gov.uk/dadsandsons
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities
www.dfes.gov.uk/sen
www.ofsted.gov.uk
www.lsc.gov.uk
www.dundee.ac.uk/fedsoc/ParentsInEducation
www.fathersdirect.com
www.parentmail.co.uk
www.cedc.org.uk (*ContinYou*)
www.educationextra.org.uk (*ContinYou*)
www.workingwithmen.org.uk
www.FathersResearch.co.uk
www.literacytrust.org.uk/database/parentindex.html
www.children-ne.org.uk/
www.nfpi.org
www.niace.org.uk
www.parents.org.uk
www.basic-skills.co.uk
www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus
www.surestart.gov.uk

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, Department for Education, USA –
www.ed.gov/parents/

The Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, Australia –
www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/efathers/efinfo.html

Further research on fathers can be found in the *Impact of Parental Involvement in Children's Education* topic paper which can be found at www.teachernet/workingwithparents

Some useful resources

Guidelines on working with fathers

- **Guidelines on working with fathers in family services (not specific to schools)** are published by the Parenting Education and Support Forum: Fathers and families and also by Fathers Direct (April 2004) *Working with Fathers: A Guide for Everyone Working with Families*.
- **Guidelines specific to education settings** *Fathers Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice* by Rebecca Goldman for the National Family and Parenting Institute – to be published in autumn 2004.

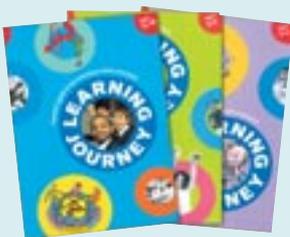
Resources and ideas for involving fathers in their children's learning and school-based programmes

- *It's A Man Thing* – (see the *ContinYou* websites).
- *Active Dads* – (see the *ContinYou* websites).
- *Programmes for engaging fathers through sport* – see the Playing for Success website and Lancashire County Council has literacy and sports programmes for fathers and children of all ages including teenagers www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/projects/dadsnlads.
- See the National Literacy Trust website for national literacy initiatives like *Reading the Game* and *Reading Champions*.
- Fajerman, L. (2000) *Involving fathers in their sons' reading* – a leaflet produced by Save the Children which includes practical activities as well as research findings on barriers to engagement and fathers' attitudes.
- Orme, D. (1999) *Read me another, Dad!* – an activity and story book for fathers and sons published by Save the Children.
- *Working with Men* resources focused on literacy activities for fathers and sons.
- Case studies of about 15 LEA, school and family learning projects which effectively involve fathers in children's learning and in schools – (see *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: A Review of Research and Practice* by Rebecca Goldman for the National Family and Parenting Institute – to be published in autumn 2004).
- *YMCA Dads and Lads (and Lasses)* handbook and resources www.ymca.org.uk/bfora/systems.
- *Fathers Matter! Involving fathers in Children's Learning: A Kit for Educators and Other Professionals* (2000) Downey CA: Los Angeles County Office of Education www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/fathers/presentation/index.html.

Training and whole school approaches to involving fathers

- *Training for teachers and other practitioners working with fathers* – (see the *FathersDirect* and *Working with Men* websites).
- Accreditation for your school's programmes for engaging fathers – (see the *ContinYou* and *Children North-East* websites for examples).
- Establishing e-mail communication systems for engaging with fathers – (see the *Parentmail* website).
- *Fathers Direct: Photo pack and posters*. Three full-size posters of positive images of fathers and children for display purposes, together with a pack of 20 high quality A5 laminated images of fathers, children and mothers for display and group work activities with fathers. Each A5 image is accompanied by a key research fact showing the importance of fathers in child development.
- The *Family Action Centre* website contains a range of staff development resources including:
 - *Checklist for Including Fathers and Father figures in Schools*
 - *A Father Involvement Inventory*
 - *Five rules for attracting fathers and father figures*
 - *Having a go: Why Men volunteer in School.*

Some useful materials



The Learning Journey.
A parent's guide to the school curriculum. Ref: Learning Journey.



Help your children to learn. Leaflets by parents for parents. Ref: HYCL, HYCL 1-8.



The Parent Centre

The place to find lots of information and advice about your child's education and how you can help. You can search for local schools, find out where to get help if things go wrong at school and ask questions. Have a look at www.parentcentre.gov.uk.

Research references and sources of further reading

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If you would like to share your experiences, or you have any queries or require further information, please visit our website:

www.parentcentre.gov.uk or contact
Carolyn Unsted at **parents.website@dfes.gsi.gov.uk**

Copies of this toolkit can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Textphone: 0845 60 555 60
E-mail: dfes@prolog.uk.com

Please quote ref: DfES/0314/2004

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