



Insights from the Virtual Room

Alongside a great panel we also had a wealth of experience in the virtual room. Here are the comments made throughout the webinar.

Practice tips and reflections for supporting greater engagement with dad.

"As practitioners we also need to normalise 'fathers are parents too' and encourage groups for both parents to attend"

"I think personal letters to dad should be sent when mum becomes pregnant, inviting dads to appointments"

"I think leaving things for dad to complete to involve him, rather than just mother focused, works as it affects the child no matter which parent"

"It sounds like we need to share the contacts/links with mothers to share with their partners and encourage them to access"

"I think that grandparents can be very supportive of ensuring the whole family is included and support their sons and daughters to be confident and get the right information and support"

"My big tip to practitioners is learn father's name"

"Acceptance is needed in practice. They should know how great they are at being a dad and it should be celebrated"

"I was pleased with an Early Help worker who completed baby massage in the evening so that dad could participate and bond with baby too"

"Having groups virtually has been a positive in some ways during COVID as they can join in"

"We have done our own research and dads like to spend more 1-2-1 time during none working hours and would love a fathers and male role model group"

Recognising and improving dad's mental health.

"I have been saddened seeing the pressures that dads have about having time off from work if needed. They seem to be spinning plates. We try and encourage them to complete carers' assessments and support them to have time off work if needed."

"I have had numerous men who have been very anxious about work not being understanding. One father took paternity leave for planned C-section that kept being delayed. He was upset that he had wasted time before babies arrived"

"I agree that men will talk when they are asked"

"Professionals are embarrassed to ask fathers"

"Do you think that professionals are unsure how to ask so not to cause upset/embarrassment?"

"As a midwife we have prompts and checklists to assess maternal mental wellbeing but there is no prompt for check in with partners"

"In Stoke we have done a lot of work to include dads. In my practice I have undertaken the same Perinatal Mental Health screening with some of the dads at the same time as I have the mum. We do ask both mum and dad at the new birth visit about how they are, particularly in respect of mental health"(Health Visitor)

"I have noticed Dad's more likely to seek support for their own mental health when I tell them they also get perinatal priority with IAPT - they are important to"

Males in the workforce.

In response to a question put to the panel about increasing the diversity of the early years workforce, the virtual room commented.

"I asked dads this before I found that they are happy to talk to anyone as long as they are made to feel part of what's happening and that they are listened to too"

"I think having men involved in services is the ideal, but I think openness is the next step"

"We need a bank of male volunteers of all ages and from different backgrounds that can speak to fathers"
(Midwife)

"Men are very valuable in the workplace on the Mother and Baby Unit. We have a few but it's hard to recruit them permanently"

"We had a male Community Mental Health Nurse in our team and some ladies wanted a female"
(Perinatal Mental Health Team)

"Is there something about 'caring' roles being undervalued and therefore underpaid and that puts men off?"

"I don't know what to say around that. My husband was a nurse and my children still related to nurses as being females. I can't explain that"

Covid 19 and dad's engagement.

"The pandemic has highlighted this further as contacts are often either virtual / telephone and if face to face, appointments are often limited to one parent accompanying the child. This is often the mother"

"NUH have groups for mothers, couples and partners only including virtually since Covid-19. Having groups virtually has been a positive in some ways during COVID as they can join in".

Challenges to supporting greater engagement with dad's.

"I think Fathers have been missed unintentionally for so long it is hard for them to engage with services and budget cuts do not help"

"I do think that sadly this is also a reflection of the pressures on maternity services in terms of amount of information and screening that has to be shared"

"Lot of fathers were sceptical that father only events would be actually able to get fathers to attend!"

"We have to ask for consent for the dads and mum has to give the consent even if the relationship has broken down which is already singling them out"

