

# Breaking down the barriers to engagement



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# Learning Objectives



- ▶ To understand knowledge of working with fathers to improve practice
- ▶ Identify the Father role and what may prevent this developing
- ▶ Have ideas of embedding learning into practice.
- ▶ To know what is available for Fathers
- ▶ To be aware of the policies around working with Fathers
- ▶ To know where to go to obtain further information and learning to support Fathers



- ▶ One to one work with Dads under 25 from pregnancy until the child's first birthday
- ▶ Helping young fathers gain ownership, autonomy and responsibility.
- ▶ To be consistent, reliable and safe for the child.
- ▶ Key areas covered include: attachment, child development, managing healthy relationships, mental/emotional health, managing finances and exploring work/education goals.
- ▶ Leeds university research completed last year –

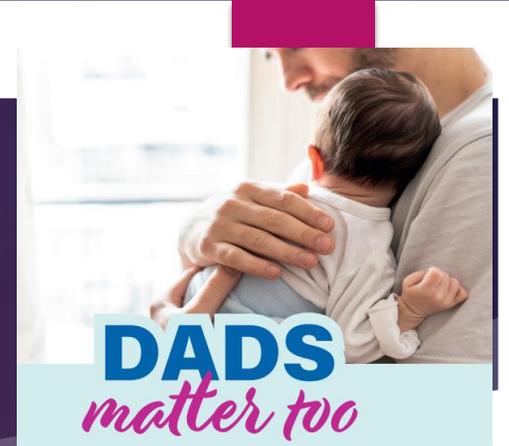


- ▶ Work one to one with dads who have children on the edge of care
- ▶ Work with dads based on their perception of 'troubles' identified from an initial scaling tool.
- ▶ Key areas covered include attachment, child development, managing healthy relationships, mental/emotional health, managing finances and exploring work/education goals.
- ▶ Delivery of the Lads 2 Dads group (8-week programme)
- ▶ Also, academic evaluation through the institute of public are and Oxford Brooks university.
- ▶ Lived experience representation at various events, DfE policy makers events, DfE Child protection reform group, National Community Care events and Social work England to date....



### Next steps

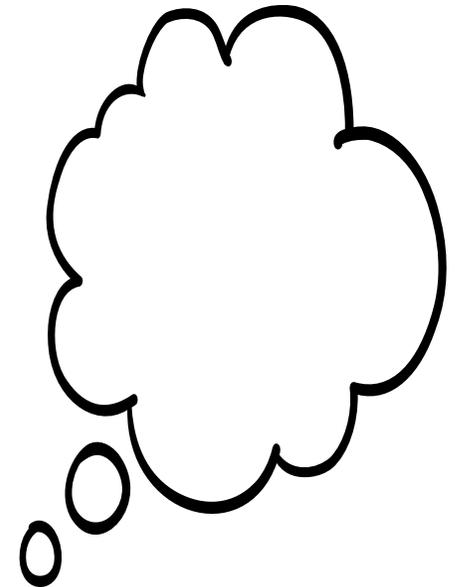
- ▶ Take the learning from the last two years and establish dads workers in each of the Support and Safeguarding Area teams (5).
- ▶ Workers will have a specific remit of directly working with dads at all levels of CSC, Support, Child in need, Child protection and public Law outline.
- ▶ Aim is to ensure dads are active, heard and understood at any level of planning.
- ▶ And of course, early intervention and de-escalation is paramount



**When you hear the word dad what thoughts immediately come to mind?**

**What do you see as the role of a dad in a family?**

**Please share your thoughts.....**



# Further questions...



Q1: What do you think the barriers are to working with Dads?

Q2: What do you think dads barriers are to working with services?



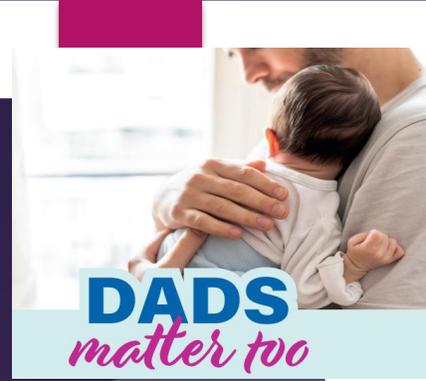
# Barriers we've identified when working with dads



- Shame, stigma
- Trust
- Judgement
- Attachment, poor relationships
- Poor mental health, low self-esteem, self-worth
- Difficulties in receiving formal diagnosis
- Low expectations of dads
- Addiction/substance misuse
- Society Perception of masculinity
- Past experiences with social care and other agencies
- Lack of understanding/acknowledging the role/importance's of dad within their child's life
- Legislation in relation to Parental responsibility and recording of birth certificates

- Following the mothers narrative
- Lack of time – i.e., perception of engagement
- Agencies agenda – i.e., midwives needing to see mothers, social workers needing to see children
- Lack of positive male role models
- Socially constructed role of men/dads
- Lack of services and agencies acknowledging men are victims of Domestic Abuse
- Culture of men in a western society – i.e., not seeing/allowing men to be victims, vulnerable or share emotions
- Lack of support agencies targeting men/dads
- Dad's information not record, or miss recorded on Liquid Logic
- Professional subconscious bias

# Barriers Dads identified as the most significant!



- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Attachment, poor relationships
- ▶ Past experiences with social care and other agencies
- ▶ Following the mothers narrative
- ▶ Agencies agenda – i.e., midwives needing to see mothers, social workers needing to see children
- ▶ Lack of positive male role models
- ▶ Socially constructed role of men/dads

# Dads – Did you know?



- ▶ Research has shown links between how sensitively the Father plays and interacts with a 12 month old and language development.
- ▶ On becoming a Father a man's testosterone drops significantly lower than non-fathers, and remains low if contact with the child is sustained.
- ▶ Transition into Fatherhood can take up to two years compared to 9 months for Mothers meaning Fathers may need longer support.
- ▶ Men living with pregnant partners have higher prolactin levels which increases protective feelings and develop lower testosterone levels after birth, also linked to being less sexually active and more protective (Gettler 2014)
- ▶ Fathers' attachment is thought to consist of three components: **interaction**, **accessibility** and **responsibility**.

# Anna Machin



- ▶ Life of Dad
- ▶ Anna Machin: [Anna Machin: We need to change the conversation about fathers | TED Talk](#)





# Voice of Dads



I want help and advice with feeding/practical stuff, but I'm not always able to make the appointments my partner arranges with professionals.

I felt ignored by professionals in pregnancy

The letters for appointments all come addressed to my partner, this makes it really difficult for me to use parental leave at work, even though I know I am entitled to it

I feel Dads should get exactly the same support and input as mums as Dads need as much preparation as Mums.

# Mentalising



- ▶ What is this and what does it mean.....
- ▶ “Mentalization, or better mentalizing, is the process by which we make sense of each other and ourselves, implicitly and explicitly, in terms of subjective states and mental processes.”

*Bateman & Fonagy, 2010*

Simplified, we all have beliefs, emotions, motivations, intentions, and needs, and these influence our behaviour. Mentalising is the ability to capture those in our own imagination. It is about having the capacity to create an imaginary representation in our minds of what might be going on in someone else’s mind. That representation will never be completely accurate, but we can still imagine it.

- ▶ "understanding misunderstanding.“...”Thinking about thinking“

# HOW !!

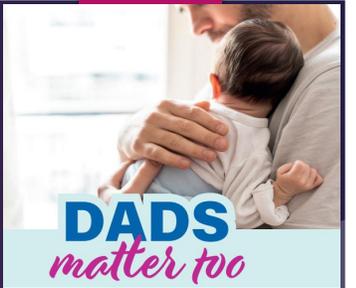


***EPISTEMIC TRUST IS USED AS A GUIDE TO INTERPRET WHAT OTHER PEOPLE MEAN: BECAUSE WE EXPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION TO BE RELEVANT TO US, WE CHOOSE THE HYPOTHESIS THAT SATISFIES OUR EXPECTATIONS OF RELEVANCE***

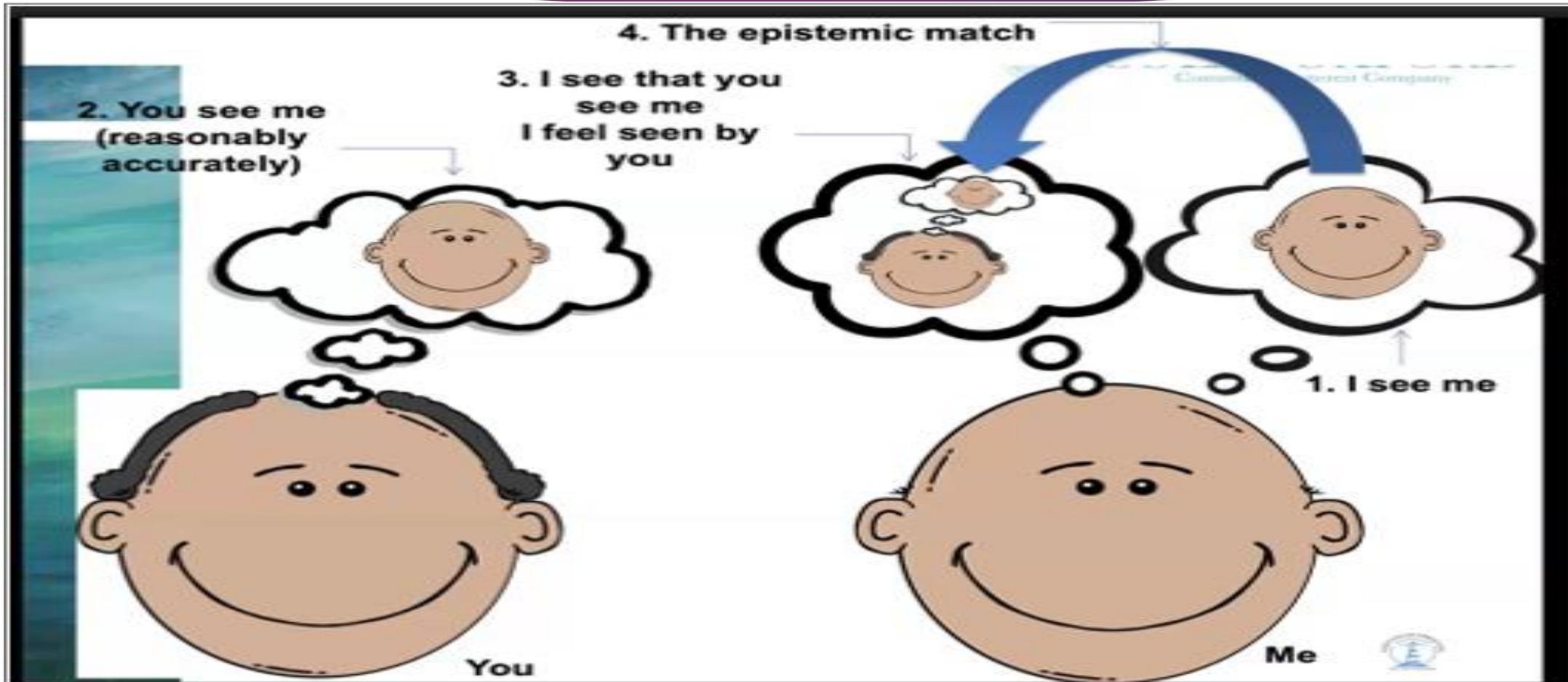
ALESSANDRO TALIA, 2019

[Epistemic Trust for AMBIT - YouTube](#)

# Matching



Empathy & Validation are needed to build the foundations of trust.



# The three peaks challenge!



## The three peaks

- You need to know where you stand
- You need to know I know where you stand
- Then you might be curious about where I stand
- And then we might be able to establish a shared place to stand together



# Mind-mindedness



- ▶ Reflective functioning; thinking of baby through in thoughts feelings and touch to develop strong attachment
- ▶ Writing a letter to baby in pregnancy is one way which we support this
- ▶ Encouraging interaction with bump and sharing information of what in happening for baby in the womb
- ▶ Feedback loop and mirror play

*Dear Baby.....*

*With Love,*

*Daddy x*



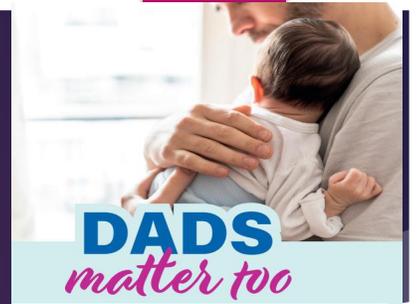
# Exploring Barriers



Confronting these barriers, and working with Dads to explore these further you are uncovering hidden risks, and challenging behaviours. Here are a few examples of activities I use for this:

Gingerbread man and interactive genogram , two roads  
(pictures to be scanned and added)

# What we need to work on .



- ▶ Men in the family who do not have PR are not taken seriously by professionals
- ▶ Need to consider who child is coming into contact with, so looking beyond the household, “whole family work”
- ▶ Not considering the impact of culture - Social graces
- ▶ Over scrutiny of woman in social care assessments
- ▶ Not considering use of language
- ▶ Not using trauma aware practice with men
- ▶ Observing a Trauma response as aggression
- ▶ A lack of acknowledgement regarding men as victims in DA services
- ▶ Not enough worker training about engaging men or the importance of a males role in the life of the child
- ▶ Not supporting men to understand co-parenting and the role of a father and why are they good for child
- ▶ Post natal checks are not happen for dads – dads have a hormone drop as well and therefore are at risk of suffering from post-natal depression
- ▶ Not enough emphasis on the first 1001 days of a child’s life. Or consideration in relation to attachment styles and trauma experiences for dads and the impact this has on their parenting style.

# Top tips for working with Dads



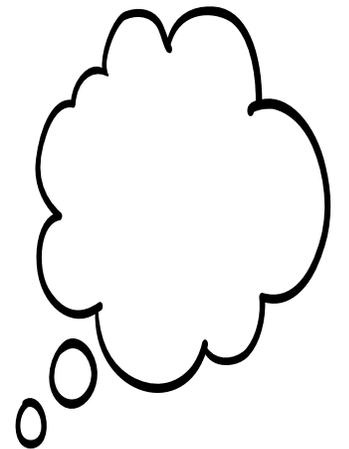
- 1) Ask for their opinions of their experience as a Dad
- 2) Give eye contact, but understand eye contact from males can be different
- 3) Have high expectations of fathers and be intolerant of failure to engage with dads.
- 4) Carry out a male involvement audits
- 5) Review your child/family registration forms in order to include Fathers
- 6) Invite dads personally to specific activities
- 7) Look at the Father from the child's point of view
- 8) Discuss with Dads how their involvement benefits their child/children
- 9) Lead from the top
- 10) Limit your use of the 'p' parent word!

# The myth of the invisible men .....

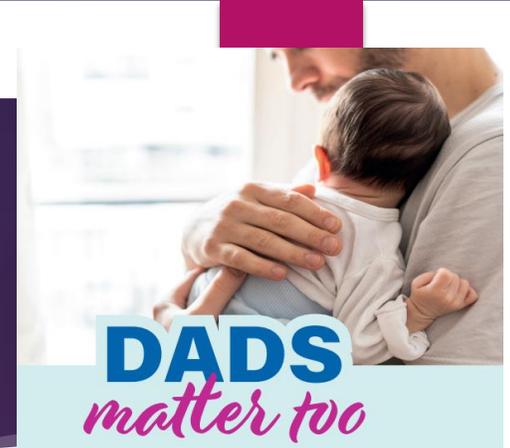


- ▶ A key theme from the report is that this group of men are too frequently overlooked and poorly engaged by universal and specialist services, such as midwives, health visitors and CSC
  - ▶ This then appears to set a pattern that is evident through targeted and specialist services, including care proceedings.
  - ▶ The opportunity for support and for early identification of both parental and children's vulnerabilities and real or potential risks are therefore not maximised

Any thoughts or questions about this ???



# Learning from Serious case reviews



- ▶ The third national review commissioned by the Child Safeguarding Practice panel explored babies under 1, who have been harmed or killed by their dad or other males in a caring role.
- ▶ 35% of all serious incident notifications involve serious harm to babies, the vast majority involving physical injury or death.
- ▶ Dads and step-dads are more likely to cause this type of harm than mother
- ▶ Male babies but especially twins are at the highest risk
- ▶ Always the dads response was to a normal form of child development such as crying
- ▶ Therefore, the dads response/behaviour was abnormal
- ▶ The review was only able to engage 8 men in this process (as they were in prison)
- ▶ It was felt that Children's Social care failed to acknowledge its impact of cannabis

# Background and contextual factors



**There are a number of contextual factors and how their interaction heightens the risk of abuse to babies:**

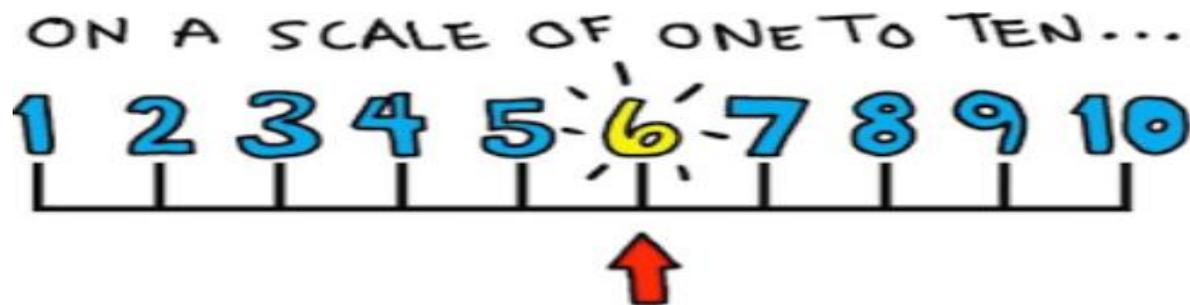
- The significance of men who have had a background of abusive, neglectful or inconsistent parenting themselves, which can lead to poor mental health
- Substance abuse, especially use of the drug Cannabis, a key risk issue
- The co-existence of domestic abuse and how some men mitigate their difficulties with others through a rapid default to violence and controlling behaviour.
- Living with the pressures of poverty, deprivation, worklessness, racism and, very problematic relationships with the mothers of their children.

# Emotional Dysregulation

- ▶ As highlighted within many series case reviews the emotional dysregulation of the father or male figure plays a catastrophic part
- ▶ Men and boy's emotions are not talked about openly in society and from a young age many boys are talk to suppress emotions, this needs to change

Some tools to use to explore emotions include:

- ▶ Emotional refuelling
- ▶ Traffic Lights
- ▶ 1-10 scale



# Resources



DadPad<sup>®</sup>

FATHERHOOD  
INSTITUTE

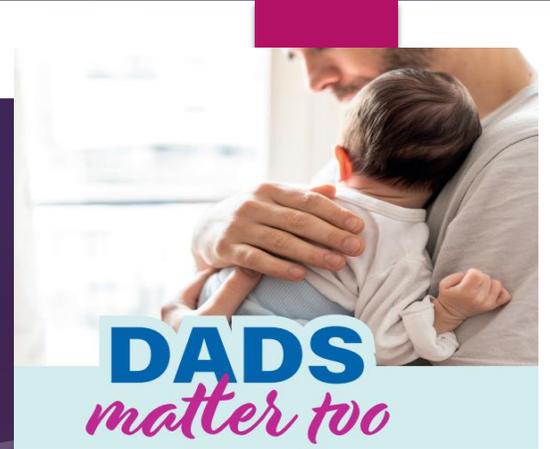


NSPCC  
'Learning'

baby  
buddy<sup>™</sup>  
by best beginnings



# Guess what.....



- ▶ Dads love just as hard as mums do
- ▶ Most dads want to be “good dads”
- ▶ Dads feel they are not seen as vulnerable and therefore have to be strong
  - ▶ They are vulnerable and don't have to be strong
- ▶ Men understand men – this make group work really important
- ▶ Dads have post-natal depression too
- ▶ Dads are also more likely to suffer from depression if the mother is affected by this, and this is more evident when a mum is suffering from post-partum psychosis (by up to 50%)
- ▶ Health visitors do not use the EPNDS with dads and SHOULD!
- ▶ A GP is notified when a woman is going to become a mum, but dads aren't .

# Remember.....

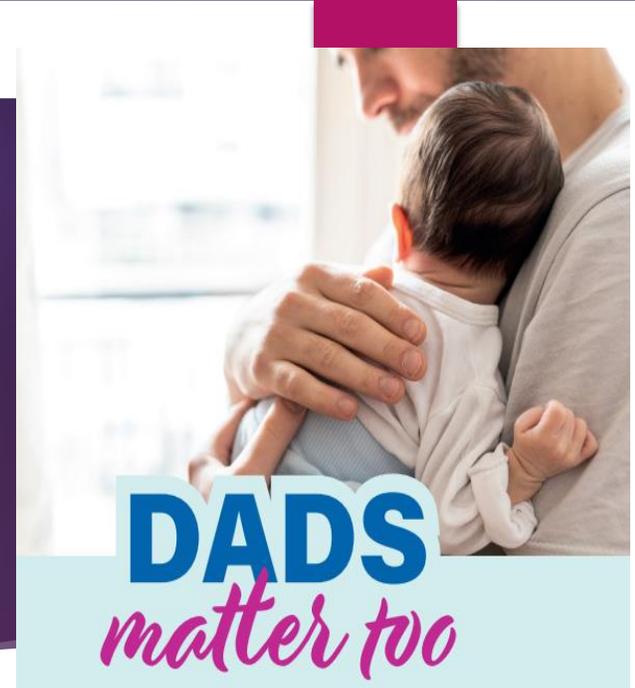


Dads are human and have feelings  
we are not always who they are on paper  
Dads are victims too  
WE have experienced trauma and had difficult experiences  
Not all men are powerful  
Dads feel shame and guilt about their children as well  
Always be open and honest  
We matter to our child .....



▶ Any questions  
or feedback ?

# Research highlight's on barriers to engaging dads



Men no use/ irrelevant/ no different to woman (Scourfield 2001,2003,2006)

Dangerous masculinities (Scourfield 2001,2003,2006)

Men avoiding social worker – mirroring behaviours as men report social workers are hard to get hold of. Social workers recording lack of engagement.

Split image of men and abuse: in one respect a loving father in another violent/drug user (Erikersson and Hester 2001; Rakill 2006)

Construction of a bad mother (Holland 2001) account of violence's not believed – higher expectations of mothers from professionals

Dad's engagement is jeopardised when they encounter Child Protection (Brandon et al. 2017) often then seen as fighting back

Workers failed to understand, underestimate or dismiss the emotions of dads (Hojer 2011, Smithers 2012, Baum and Negbi 2013)



# Helpful links

- ▶ You tube – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story
- ▶ [Respect-toolkit-for-work-with-male-victims-of-domestic-abuse-2019.pdf\(reducingtherisk.org.uk\)](#)
- ▶ [Help-seeking by male victims of domestic violence and abuse \(DVA\): a systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis BMJ Open](#)
- ▶ [Link to \*up against it\* research briefing – 10.13140/RG2.2.22410.18882/1](#)
- ▶ [Michael Johnson - typologies - situationnel inter-couple violence](#)
- ▶ [The best start for life a vision for the 1 001 critical days.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)