



**Background**  
Gaps in working with fathers have been identified at both a local and national level. The Triennial Analysis for Serious Case Reviews (2014-2017) highlights a failure to identify significant figures within families. Men in particular are often invisible or absent in assessments by professionals and as a result, very little information was known about them.

**Local Support for Fathers and Further Resources**  
There are a number of local and national resources for fathers and partners. Swindon has a fathers worker which can be accessed via the Early Help Hub. For further information and support for fathers please visit [www.fatherhoodinstitute.com](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.com) [www.thedadpads.co.uk](http://www.thedadpads.co.uk)

**Fathers Mental Health**  
In recent years, the importance of fathers mental health has been recognised as being as important as the mental health of mothers. First time fathers are particularly vulnerable to depression and 1 in 10 dads to be will become depressed in their partners pregnancy. Practitioners should use all contacts with fathers as an opportunity to ask the question 'how are you dad?'

**Hidden Men**  
Learning from case reviews have identified 2 categories of 'hidden' men. These are men who posed a risk to the child which resulted in them suffering harm and men who were capable of protecting and nurturing children but were over looked by professionals. Professionals should open conversations about parental relationships, failure to do so could possibly overlook any potential risk. Similarly, failing to identify or engage fathers ignores their importance in a child's emotional and psychological development. Read more on hidden men [here](#).



**Identifying Fathers**  
Engaging with a fathers requires knowing information about him. Whilst this is relatively straight forward for parents that are cohabitating, it can be more complex when parents are separated. Every effort should be made to engage fathers when it comes to their children. Sandstorm *et al* recommends being explicit with the child's mother about the importance of speaking to the father

**Engaging Fathers**  
Engaging fathers has the potential to benefit the entire family. A range of barriers can exist to engaging fathers in practice such as the design of services, stereotypes related to the role of fathers and a lack of training to work well with fathers. It is important practitioners consider adjusting the delivery of service provision to ensure fathers have a reasonable opportunity to engage with services for their children.

**Effective Approaches to Engage Fathers**  
Professionals are likely to be successful in engaging fathers when:  
- Their engagement is presented from the start as expected and important  
- Fathers needs, including their mental health, are routinely assessed  
- Professionals regard any interventions as being as much for fathers as for mothers  
- Fathers who do not participate are followed up  
- A mothers ambivalence or resistance is taken serious.  
The Fatherhood Institute and Family Rights Group have developed a good practice guide for working with fathers which can be accessed [here](#)