




Encouraging paternal involvement in children's services

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The reports were completed between September 2009 and February 2010 and apply a wide range of research methodologies. They are not intended to be longitudinal research reports but they provide a snapshot of the views and opinions of the groups consulted as part of the studies. As these projects were time limited, the evidence base can be used to inform planning but should not be generalised across the wider population.

These reports reflect the views of the practitioners that undertook the research. The views and opinions of the authors should not be taken as representative of CWDC.

A new UK Government took office on 11 May. As a result the content in this report may not reflect current Government policy.

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For further information about this project contact –

Liz Rowe
Centre Coordinator
Holsworthy Area Children's Centre
Great Oak Meadow
Holsworthy
Devon
EX22 6EX

Telephone – 01409 253508

Email – Liz.rowe@devon.gov.uk

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Abstract

This research investigates why male carers tend not to engage with children's services, specifically children's centre services, and how practitioners and policy makers can review and adapt their practices to encourage further engagement. The research focuses on perceived barriers, reasoning and accounts of experiences from male carers and practitioners.

Practitioners and male carers who were registered with a children's centre, and had a child under five years in their family, participated in the research. Focus groups were carried out with 13 practitioners. Thirty male carers completed questionnaires, and 8 of these were interviewed. Finally, 75 male carers completed a 'moving forward' survey.

Thematic analysis of the focus group sessions, questionnaires and interviews revealed the following themes:

- parenting children under five years is traditionally a female role
- fathers perceive that government policy prevents them from being more involved
- finance restricts fathers involvement; and
- children's centres services are perceived as female orientated

The main implications for practice within children's centres:

- Ensure better communication directly to male carers to increase value and input into their children's experiences.
- Increase services to incorporate working male carers and focus on topics based on male interests.
- Make families more aware of consultation to change policy, and support positive changes in government practices in increasing paternity leave at reasonable salaries.
- Work in partnership with other professionals to develop a shared vision. Aim to encourage male carer inclusion, focusing on making services available to them, dispelling the myth that childcare relates to gender.
- Work in partnership with other professionals to help raise awareness of the benefits of children spending time with their fathers - benefits for both children/infants *and* the fathers themselves.

Introduction

This project set out to identify a) the barriers faced by male carers (of children under five) in engaging with children's services, and b) the potential solutions to supporting them to better engage with children's services.

The project focused on a Sure Start children's centre in a rural town, with a catchment of 604 children under five years. The research investigated practitioners' understanding of the lower incidence of male involvement in children's services, and fathers', step-fathers' and grandfathers' views on their role in the early years.

The aims of this research are to:

- learn more about how children's centres can successfully engage with fathers and provide an integrated service to the whole family
- ensure that fathers are consulted and involved in any changes to practice.

Literature Review

The outcomes set out in *Every Child Matters* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008) link directly to the core offer of a Sure Start children's centre. The outcomes are mutually reinforcing, for example, a child who is *healthy* and *safe* will thrive and *enjoy* their childhood, leading to increased educational *achievement* and confidence, which will enable them to *achieve economic well being*.

The challenge of involving fathers, and the benefits to children and the wider family for their increased involvement, is highlighted in the Sure Start Children's Centres practice guidance (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2006).

'All Sure Start Children's Centre services should be responsive to supporting fathers in their role as a parent and in their relationship with their partner or ex-partner, and more generally to promote the role of fathering' (pp.81)

Furthermore, the increased involvement of fathers within children's centre services is part of the core offer designated by the grant funding from the government Sure Start department (Devon County Council, 2007).

As gender roles have merged and changed, and family make up becomes more diverse, several studies have taken place to identify the benefits of early input and consistent involvement of fathers in their children's lives – whether living with the mother or not. Welsh, Buchanan, Flouri, & Lewis (2004) used data collected from The National Child Development Study (NCDS), which follows 17,000 children born in England, Wales and Scotland in one week in 1958, to investigate the effects of father involvement and whether early involvement leads to sustained support for their children. Welsh et al found that at various ages in the child's life, the parents' roles and involvement changed. For example, the mother was the main care-giver at infancy, however the father was a more prominent figure at age seven. Good father-child relations led to reduced alcohol and drug abuse at secondary age, and positive involvement of fathers in the child's upbringing led to lesser psychological damage to children where separation had occurred.

On the subject of engaging fathers in both children's services and health and social care services, several studies have highlighted the need for practitioners to fully understand the needs of male carers before attempting to support them within those services. Milner (1996) suggests that fathers' details be obligatory on registration and official forms, therefore satisfying the Sure Start requirements of capturing data about the child's father in order to provide appropriate support. However, in reality the majority of registration forms are completed by mothers, and therefore often omit the father's data if they are estranged or unknown for example. Simply having the data alone may facilitate involvement, but on its own would not guarantee it. Burgess and Ruxton (1996) describe how fathers were often unwilling to seek support from children's services, perhaps due to a lack of awareness of the service, or of what the service actually does, but mainly because the services tend to be gender-specific. At a local level, this is mirrored in a recent evaluation of a service within a city-based children's centre in Devon (Curle 2007).

Considerable work has been carried out to find out why fathers will not access services, and what can be done to counteract the shortfall. 'Working with Fathers' (DCSF 2007) suggests practitioners should be open to the male perspective, activities must not be gender orientated, and settings must display positive images of both male and female parenting roles and activities. Wheeler and Connor (2009) suggest barriers to fathers' engagement could include life factors such as work pressures, poverty or single parenthood. The study also proposed that fathers are simply not aware of the difference they can make to their children's development.

Methodology

As defined in the introduction, this research focused on a particular children's centre. In accordance with Sure Start guidelines, data is requested from families within the catchment area when they register for services with the children's centre. At the time of the study, the centre had 448 children registered. Between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2009, 302 parents accessed the centre, 42 (13.91%) of these were fathers or male carers.

In order to increase this reach figure and meet the aims of this research there were five phases to the project. For registration purposes, father is defined as father/male primary carer so will include those who self-define the latter such as step-fathers for example. The selection criteria for this research included any male carer registered with the centre, with a child under five years old.

Phase One

An event was organised to promote the research and attempt to encourage whole families to come to the centre. This was an open day within the centre on a Saturday, with a funded photographer who was employed to capture portrait shots of children with a significant male in their lives. The images were displayed and centre users voted for images to be collated into a calendar celebrating the role of fathers in children's lives. This identified a group of male carers who were willing to take part in the research. The event was promoted through centre services, via registration contact details of mothers and fathers and on the website for two weeks prior to the event.

This 'starter' event was designed to target male carers but not necessarily men only; it was something for fathers to come to with their children. The fathers were invited directly in a positive manner. The event enabled fathers to acclimatise to the centre without having to make any commitment, and enabled identification of 30 fathers who were willing to take part in the research.

Phase Two

Alongside the starter event, which was designed to encourage male participation, two focus groups were held with practitioners from two local children's centres. Focus groups lasted 60 minutes, with 40 minutes of discussion and a 20-minute role play. The details are included in appendix A.

This activity enabled teams to discuss personal opinions and experiences. It enabled practitioners to both identify perceived barriers for male carers in accessing services, and suggest solutions, based on these perceived barriers. The role play activity helped practitioners to challenge their ideas and thoughts.

This method was selected as it is direct, economical, thorough and as objective as possible. The discussion allowed insights and understanding in ways which simple questionnaire items may not. Three questions were asked of the teams in the focus groups:

- Why do fathers not attend services for their under fives?
- Why is it important for male carers to be involved in their child's early years development?
- What can we do to improve engagement?

The role play activity gave teams the opportunity to reflect on the handouts and conversation. The final part of the focus group asked practitioners to complete an evaluation of the tasks. This provided additional data which was incorporated and assimilated with the data recorded from conversations with fathers.

Phase Three

A self-completion questionnaire was issued to the fathers who took part in the starter event and who had agreed to further communication. This part of the research evolved from the starter event, as a result of its success. The event was too busy to enable practitioners to give enough quality time to each of the fathers who attended, and therefore, without this phase, not enough value would have been placed on the people who wanted to get involved.

The questionnaire was designed to find out how much knowledge the fathers had about the centre and services for children in the area. The questions were typically open and offered the opportunity to gain baseline information from fathers in this catchment (see appendix B).

The benefits of a questionnaire included a) flexibility for fathers to highlight the issues that were specific to them, b) a useful format to obtain a general overview of the issues, and c) the ability for the respondent to complete it in their own time, rather than feeling tied to giving a swift response without thought. Not all respondents gave thorough explanations of issues, so this information gap was addressed in follow-up interviews.

Phase Four

Eight of the fathers agreed to be contacted further for an informal interview to follow up some of the issues highlighted in the questionnaire (see appendix C). The interviews took place in person, over the telephone and, due to adverse weather conditions, via email conversations. This is not the most ideal method for one-to-one interviews, but was necessary given the circumstances. Crèche provision was scheduled for the interviews, to encourage the fathers to bring their children along, however the centre was closed unexpectedly due poor weather.

Despite the setbacks, the interviews enabled a) more clarification on needs of fathers in this area, b) the opportunity to develop an improved relationship with some of the fathers who were accessing the centre, and c) an appropriate local service therefore identifying key implications for practice. The interviews were conducted as an informal conversation, and allowed enough time for fathers to think and reflect about their responses to the questions.

Phase Five

The final phase of the project asked the 75 families and children from phase three to give their opinions and preferences for changing practice, with reference to the thoughts and suggestions obtained from the practitioners in phase two. This tick box list (appendix D) was emailed and posted out to families with a return email/stamped addressed envelope. These preferences will be followed up and incorporated into the planning for the services in 2010-2011 and hopefully monitored through the parent forum.

Ethical considerations

Permissions and consents were obtained from the children's centre manager and practitioners. The participants in the questionnaire and subsequent interviews and survey were advised that their contributions would be anonymous. Data was stored securely and password protected where necessary. It was held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Care has been given to ensure no contributor could be identified.

Findings

Please note the views stated are from the sample/demographic only and do not represent fathers nationally and/or the views of CWDC.

Thirteen practitioners took part in the two focus groups, 134 parents attended the information event, and 30 questionnaires were completed by male carers, of which eight had an informal interview. As a result of the original interviews and questionnaires, a moving-forward survey was issued to the 134 parents. Seventy-five surveys were returned. The male carers were aged between 17 and 66 years.

The focus group evaluations, questionnaires and interview transcripts were analysed thematically. Four recurrent themes identified why male carers do not engage with children's centres services.

- Parenting children under five years is traditionally a female role.
- Fathers perceive that government policy prevents them from being more involved.
- Finance restricts fathers involvement.
- Children's centres services are perceived as female orientated.

Parenting

The findings identified a very clear perception of parenting as a female-orientated role, especially where babies and infants were concerned. Reflecting Wheeler and Connor's (2009) findings, the questionnaires and interviews revealed that several fathers believed that because of the strong maternal bond and the attachment made through breastfeeding, mothers are traditionally the main care giver.

The perceived role for the father is reported as the main earner, and is traditionally held by many in the community. One father reported that, because men generally have higher incomes,

the role of child carers remains the mother's. This perception is challenged by one father who considers the change in society as increasingly difficult for mothers:

'The traditional role is being challenged now as more women go out to work as well as men. However they also mostly have the childcare role too.'

Practitioners echoed these views from their experiences within children's centre services, reporting that many families in this area rely on income earned as self-employed tradesmen. Of the sample surveyed, the fathers believed that they are not entitled to any benefits, resulting in no time off to spend with their children or new babies. One father stated that he wished he was allowed to do more in his children's lives. He felt that he could help out more and support his partner, but also felt he would like to do it his way.

Female-orientated services

Through the questionnaires, but mainly through the interviews, evidence shows that many of the fathers involved are averse to going to the children's centre or other similar settings. Many referred to pre-schools and nursery settings as educational and therefore put greater importance on their involvement at these settings.

'The children's centre really isn't my type of thing, it feels uncomfortable and there is a distinct lack of men'

One practitioner commented that they would change their practice as a result of the focus group: they realised they had not been treating fathers with enough respect, and that it could be harder for fathers to come into the centre than they realised. Echoing this, all eight fathers interviewed suggested that having a male worker in the centre would encourage them to access centre services, especially if the services reflected male interests.

Finance and working hours

Through the focus group, practitioners reported that the main barrier to engaging fathers was their working hours and traditional role. The fathers interviewed concurred that they cannot access many sessions because they are working. Two fathers reported that they returned to work three days after their partner and new baby returned home after birth, due to income and worry over the family finances. Others returned after one week, and the minority took two weeks paternity leave.

Through the interviews, fathers indicated that if groups at the centre ran on weekends they could, and would, attend with their children, and most would prefer it if their partners came with them. This also aligns with Wheeler and Connor's (2009) suggestion that fathers do not engage with services because of life factors such as work pressures.

Fathers were asked how many hours per week they spent on average playing with their children, the results ranged from 1 to 60 hours: averaging 17 hours per week. All fathers reported that they would like to increase this amount, two suggested up to 24 hours per day. Only one father wanted his amount to reduce.

One key aspect of this research has been fathers' feelings of being surplus to requirement from birth onwards, and that their role is formed within society as not being a child carer. This was reinforced by the feelings of one father, who wished to know why they were not able to stay on the ward with their new baby and wife just hours after she gave birth.

Government Policy

All practitioners felt that even though Sure Start and the Every Child Matters agenda have highlighted the need for engaging fathers, this is no easy task. Moving on from the finance and income issues, several fathers in the questionnaires requested more information on paternity leave. All fathers noted that the expectations from policy are contradictory in that they are expected to be supporting their families, however also expected to be in the home. One father suggested that if the government were to offer similar leave to maternity for fathers with a reasonable salary they may have opted for it and spent more time getting to know their infant. Another father felt that if more women went out to work, the traditional view of parenting may start to change as fathers may be more prevalent in the home.

One key aspect of this research, as mentioned above, has been fathers' feelings of being surplus to requirement. As discussed, one father was concerned that he was not able to stay on the ward with his new baby and wife just hours after she gave birth. Another wanted to know why money is invested into children's centres to encourage fathers' engagement when actually they could do with some paid time off when their babies are born.

Implications for practice

Following the thematic analysis, the main implications for practice within children's centres:

- Ensure better communication directly to male carers to increase value and input into their children's experiences.
- Increase services to incorporate working male carers and focus on topics based on male interests.
- Make families more aware of consultation to change policy, and support positive changes in government practices in increasing paternity leave at reasonable salaries.
- Work in partnership with other professionals to develop a shared vision. Aim to encourage male carer inclusion, focusing on making services available to them, dispelling the myth that childcare relates to gender.
- Work in partnership with other professionals to help raise awareness of the benefits of children spending time with their fathers - benefits for both children/infants *and* the fathers themselves.

The hope is that by all agencies working towards a shared vision of inclusive practice for fathers, children will benefit and experience improved outcomes. The practitioner focus groups highlighted the need for all staff to encourage involvement, even if it is simply gaining the perspective of the father through the mother. Additionally, professionals will need to be more aware of involving absent fathers, ensuring they make parents aware of the benefits for children of working with the whole family, even after separation.

Practically, for the children's centre, the following table (from the 'moving forward' survey) shows how the fathers would like to see services in the future. The low numbers for consultation events may indicate how little fathers may think their opinion would count within centre services. Conversely, this research process has identified how helpful and forthcoming the fathers are.

Table 1. 'Moving forward' survey results of 75 fathers

Activity & Time	Interested in attending		Did not answer
	✓	×	
Out & About activity programme (Saturdays)	60	5	10
DIY the Centre event (Weekend)	40	25	10
Outside area development (Saturdays and weekdays)	40	30	5
Consultation afternoon/evening with Dads	5	65	5
Parenting course (For all parents in a family at the weekend)	45	25	5
Play in the park event	50	5	20
Young Fathers Group (under 25 years)	2	55	18
Lone/Step Parent Group	5	60	10
Swimming sessions	40	25	10

Several of the activities above will be initiated within the children's centre in the spring of 2010 and the outdoor project will be led by a male landscape gardener. Therefore some of those men who feel anxious in the company of women will be supported. All of the activities are based on male orientated interests and hobbies, other suggestions for local provision also included:

- soft play area
- safe park for all ages
- more weekend activities
- yoga
- reading groups
- dad orientated group
- family days
- dads and lads days
- camping.

Conclusion

The quotes used were from the males who attended the photography session at the centre, including those who felt so strongly about the setting being a female-orientated environment and generalising that women make them uncomfortable. The body language and non-verbal communication from the fathers during some of the interviews indicated how uncomfortable they felt with the setting. This also reflects what they said in the interviews, about feeling that the children's centre was "not the place for them".

Reflecting on the issue of fathers' lack of involvement with the centre, practitioners identified similar barriers to Wheeler and Connor (2009), such as work and other commitments. Practitioners realised they had failed to take account of how difficult it might be for fathers to actually step over the threshold. This was linked to the fathers' comments about the children's centre being female-orientated.

Given that fathers currently feel that they do not fit in at the children's centre, practitioners need to respond to this and make them feel like they do fit in. This could help to eradicate feelings about being surplus to requirement from birth onwards, and encourage the kind of involvement of fathers in their children's upbringing that was identified as beneficial by Welsh et al (2004). Furthermore, as Wheeler and Connor (2009) also suggest, these findings indicate that fathers are not wholly aware of the benefits of their involvement with their children from birth. The Fatherhood Institute (2009) have conducted many studies to identify the benefits in later childhood such as reduced alcohol and drug abuse/use, educational attainment, and good parent-child relationships in adolescence.

It was surprising to learn that, even in an ideal world (i.e. where no work or commitment exists), the fathers interviewed would not spend much more time playing with their children per week than the actual average of 17 hours. However, this does show how fathers themselves see their role in their child and family's life.

One of the main findings of this research is the lack of information given to fathers from all professionals involved with their children. One father reported that he preferred to go back to work after the birth of his baby as he was not sure how he could even help. Perhaps this indicates there is a lack of education and contact with fathers when they are preparing for parenthood.

The research would have been enhanced with perspectives on this issue from other professionals involved with families, such as midwives, health visitors, teachers, social workers etc. This would also raise awareness among professionals for the need to work in an integrated way and include fathers in their services.

This research has raised many questions, including why fathers are not actively requested to be at post-natal meetings with health teams. Also, questions have emerged about the mothers' perspective. How supported do they feel in their roles as parents? It seems evident that mothers are continuing to follow the tradition role of homemaker whilst also defining themselves in the world of employment, education and raising their aspirations. It would be interesting to look more closely at where older children get their inspiration and aspirations, whether it is their 'hardworking' father or 'resilient' mother? Of course this is simply an overview of the families interviewed over the last four months as part of this study.

Ultimately all professionals need to include father-friendly work practices to help to support Government initiatives and also to improve outcomes for children. There can be no value placed on the enhanced experience a child will have if their fathers are involved in their lives from the very start of the bump. Another important factor in father involvement is the importance placed on it by the mother. Mothers may try to be the gatekeeper for their children and this will affect the relationship they have with their fathers. Some mothers see their role as to bring up the child, Winnicott (1957) reminded us that usually 'it depends on what the mother does about it whether father does or does not get to know his baby' (p.81). Again, to offer effective support to families means understanding and having an awareness of all perspectives and trying to encourage mothers to enable their partners to share the parenting.

In conclusion, this research highlighted some of the reasons why fathers do not get involved with the children's centre. In contrast to common assumptions, some of these reasons are around fathers' confidence within the children's centre setting, rather than practical reasons or lack of desire to be involved. The fathers who participated in the research indicated a willingness to engage with their children's upbringing, and we now need to provide a forum in which fathers can feel comfortable doing this.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Facilitators notes

Sure Start Practice Guidance states 'All Sure Start Children's Centre services should be responsive to supporting fathers in their role as a parent and in their relationship with their partner or ex-partner, and more generally to promote the role of fathering. Managers need to make clear to all staff that this is essential for children's welfare and a core aspect of all their jobs' (DCSF, 2006)

My research is focusing on the role of fathers and paternal involvement in the early years, starting antenatally. I am hoping to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of fathers and why they do not actively engage with Children's Centre services. I hoping to identify to those who do not how beneficial it can be for their children.

By asking fathers or children exactly what they want to see, how they need support, how they feel about the statutory services, gathering data from children and practitioners, parents and carers to better identify how the programmes we are already running within Children's Centre Services can be made more appropriately targeted to actually include fathers and male carers. This area is incredibly rural therefore I believe that the reasons why male carers do not come into services is because of history and tradition rather than not being interested in what is being offered, I am hoping that obtaining the male point of view in a targeted study will help to understand drivers behind the lack of engagement in services that Children's Centres' focus on rather than speculation of timing, location, perceptions and other reasons that are currently detailed.

Notes for delivery

1. Ensure understanding of the term 'Dad' for today's discussion means any male carer pertinent to the child under five with parenting responsibility.
2. One flip chart with the question 'Why do fathers not attend service for their under fives?' – gather instant responses. Our perceived barriers, where do these thoughts stem from?

Not all fathers/male carers are good role models for children, the balance for service must respond to this fact. When looking at research and service development, must ensure you are looking at different models of parenting – i.e. two parent relationships, one parent, step parent, absent parent etc.

Mothers as gate keepers – some mothers see their role as to bring up the child; Winnicott reminded us that there is no baby without a mother (Winnicott 1958). He also said that usually 'it depends on what the mother does about it whether father does or does not get to know his baby' (Winnicott, 1957, p.81).

1. One flip chart with the question 'Why is it important for male carers to be involved in their child's early year's development? Give examples'.
2. One flip chart with the question 'What can we do to improve engagement?'
3. Role play activity (see notes below).
4. Plenary and revisit third flip chart.

Role Play Activity

Aim

In order to understand how male carers might feel, it is essential to speak to them and ask – the sister part of this study aims to undertake this but practitioners perceptions may need to be

challenged. Practitioners will feel challenged to think about solutions to situations using an action learning process. Whilst you talk I will make notes on the benefits/barriers flip charts that come up from discussion.

Reg Revans summed up learning in the following formula –

Learning (L) = Programmed knowledge (P) + Insightful questioning (Q)
(books/internet) (asking/saying I don't know)

Outcome

Practitioners have a better understanding of the real issues facing male carers and therefore be better armed to support them within centre services.

'Lasting behavioural change is more likely to follow the reinterpretation of past experience than the acquisition of fresh knowledge' REG REVANS

Activity

In small groups, each member takes on a role, the individual details of the male carers situations are only known to them to help it be more realistic to practitioners, if individuals want to have name themselves, dress up etc they can. The minimum you need within the groups -

- A male carer who has two children under five years and is very eager to get involved but works full time.
- A male carer who does not want anything to do with the centre as feels it is traditionally the child's mother's role.
- A male carer who does not work but feels very out of place in the centre.
- A male carer who regularly attends sessions when he is not working shifts.
- Children's centre practitioners
- A health visitor

Imagine the setting is an open, informal event designed to encourage participation within the centre services and to try to help fathers understand their roles. The idea is to generate discussion and provide an opportunity to use the knowledge we already have (action learning). The focus is for designing the following term's timetable based on need and consultation. It may be a good idea to start the meeting with a welcome and introductions.

Prompting statements

- Rurality
- Tradition/occupation
- Perception
- Health benefits
- Relationship benefits
- Well being
- Attachment
- Outreach
- Mothers as gatekeepers – mothers who decide how much influence dads have.
- Support for mothers?

Relevant theories and texts

- Building blocks for father involvement – page three, how fathers benefit children's well being.
- Including new fathers – a guide for maternity professionals – page 30, ways to get close to babies
- Outcomes of father involvement – page 2.
- Father and postnatal depression – page 1.

Final quote

From 'Letters to my children' page 10.

Appendix B Questionnaire

Thank you for coming along on Saturday 5th and supporting our event. As a follow up I wondered if you would take the time to complete this short questionnaire. The results are treated confidentially and will help us to better support and listen to male carers in Holsworthy. Please be honest, it will inform many policies across the UK. Thank you.

Information
What is your date of birth?
How many children do you have and what are their ages?
The Centre
What did you think of the event on 5 December?
What did you think of the venue?
How many times have you previously been involved with children's services in the past? If you have been involved, which sessions?
Do you regularly see or receive information about the children's centre? Where from?
Your children
How many hours per week do you spend playing with your children?
In an ideal world, how long would you like to spend with your children? What kind of things would you like to do?
Did you know the government has introduced many new policies including flexible working and parental leave for workers? Would you like me to send you more information?
What are your children's favourite activities or pastimes?
Why do you think caring for children is traditionally seen as a female orientated role?
How do you think this could be changed? How important to you is this change? Why?

Holsworthy

What activities are you aware of in Holsworthy for children and Families?

What other activities do you think Holsworthy needs for children and families?

Do you believe that the support, information and friendships within such as some of the services the children's centre provides will benefit children and families in the long run?

I am hoping to extend my research by doing some one to one interviews with male carers at convenient times for them. By continually checking in with parents we ensure our services are performing to the highest quality and meeting the needs of your children. If you are happy to be involved please leave your contact details and the best time to contact you here (Telephone/Mobile/Email – best times...).

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 07***76.
Liz

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

1. What are the three main reasons you do not usually engage with children's centre services?
2. What would encourage you to use the services more? (Times/flexible working)
3. If yes, what sort of groups/courses would you like to see here? (Cycling proficiency/messy play/outdoor play)
4. Who would you like to be involved?(Just Dads, Dads and kids, whole families). Why?
5. Would a male member of staff make it easier and you feel more comfortable? Why?
6. How did it make you feel coming to the children's centre?
7. How can we better provide services that meet your needs?
8. How much influence do you believe you have on your children? How important is this to you and how do you feel about it?
9. Who deals with arrangements for the children in your family? How do you feel about it?
10. How do you feel about your involvement in antenatal and postnatal programmes?
11. What benefits do you feel there are for fathers and male carers being given opportunities to meet together?

Appendix D

Moving forward

Some of the feedback from the event on the 5th and interviews with staff from the Children's Centre include the following for offering services for male carers and fathers. Please identify your preferred activities and add your own.

Please bear in mind everything the children's centre offers is funded – there is no charge.

Activity and time	I would be interested in attending x/✓
'Out and About' activity programme of ten weeks going rock-pooling, to the farm park, pond dipping, viaduct walk (Currently running on Wednesdays – change to Saturday afternoon)	
DIY the centre event (Weekend or evening).	
Programme for developing the outside area at the Centre starting April 2010 (Saturdays)	
Consultation afternoon/evening with Dads – part of parent forum? Currently running on Monday.	
Parenting course – for all parents – help with those testing times with your toddlers! (Currently runs on a Tuesday afternoon, change to Saturday or early evening).	
Play in the Park event	
Young Fathers Group – time? (For fathers under 25 years)	
Lone parent group (Evening)	
Swimming Sessions – time?	
Please add your own.....	

The Children's Workforce Development Council leads change so that the thousands of people and volunteers working with children and young people across England are able to do the best job they possibly can.

We want England's children and young people's workforce to be respected by peers and valued for the positive difference it makes to children, young people and their families.

We advise and work in partnership with lots of different organisations and people who want the lives of all children and young people to be healthy, happy and fulfilling.

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For more information please call **0113 244 6311**
or visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

Or write to CWDC, 2nd Floor, City Exchange
11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES
email info@cwdcouncil.org.uk
or fax us on 0113 390 7744

Contact us to receive this information in a different language or format, such as large print or audio tape.

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