



## **Market Research Report to gain insight into needs of fathers in Birkby**

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Client: Deighton & East Fartown Sure  
Start / South Huddersfield PCT

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Date: March/April 2006

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## Rationale and Background

Deighton and East Fartown Sure Start has expanded its geographical boundaries to include the adjacent area of Birkby. In order to address the Every Child Matter's outcomes there is a need to ensure that both fathers and mothers actively consume services, which can promote children's health and development. Engaging fathers may require a different approach to mothers, and this may vary according to cultural background. Some children's services in the past may have been perceived by fathers as being geared towards servicing mothers rather than fathers. This perception in itself can be a barrier to fathers accessing services, which may be of use in supporting them in their role.

In order to remove these barriers and better understand how we may engage fathers to a greater extent as equal consumers of children's services we need a greater understanding of how they see their role and how they see the services that are offered. In this respect services can be designed and developed that meet with their requirements, barriers can be addressed and appropriate means of promoting services can be identified

## Aim of research

To understand what the issues are in engaging father's as users of children's services how these can be addressed and the characteristics that appropriate services may need to have to appeal to this group.

## Research Objectives

### Fathers' role

To understand how fathers see their current role and how this may be changing.  
To explore the interaction they have with their children currently  
To explore how they see their role in terms of ensuring their child's health, developing their child, physically, emotionally and socially

### Gaps in engaging dads

To understand what services are currently used and not used by fathers to support their role and why?  
To understand where services are not used, why this may be the case?  
To understand how important they see the use of these services by themselves, by mothers  
To explore what other services they may like to help them spend time with their children, keep their children healthy and develop them.

### Characteristics of services

To explore how services could be made more appropriate to the needs of fathers – service design, location, timing, venues, cost promotion.

## Methodology

In order to address the research objectives set out above, two focus groups were undertaken with fathers with children under 5 living within the Birkby area. Birkby is a culturally mixed area. Given culture can have an impact on child rearing practices and role perceptions within families; two separate discussion groups were conducted purely to encourage discussion rather than to draw comparisons. One group was made up of South Asian fathers and a second of non-South Asian fathers. It is possible that the South Asian group may have contained fathers of Sikh and Muslim backgrounds. It was not possible to separate out these two groups, as budget constraints only allowed for two focus groups overall to be run. The groups were run in English.

The purpose of the research is to get a broad feel of need in the local area, rather than an in depth consideration of the need of residents who have more specific needs. A male moderator facilitated the South Asian group after advice that it would be more appropriate for the moderator to be male and from a non South Asian background. Both a male and female moderator ran the non-South Asian group. The Dads Project worker sat in as an observer for both groups.

Recruitment was carried out through an MRS accredited agency and the recruitment questionnaire was completed within the MRS Code of Conduct. The recruitment criteria were:

- Fathers
- Over 20 years old
- With child/children under 5 years old
- Speak and understand English
- Live in Birkby/Fartown area

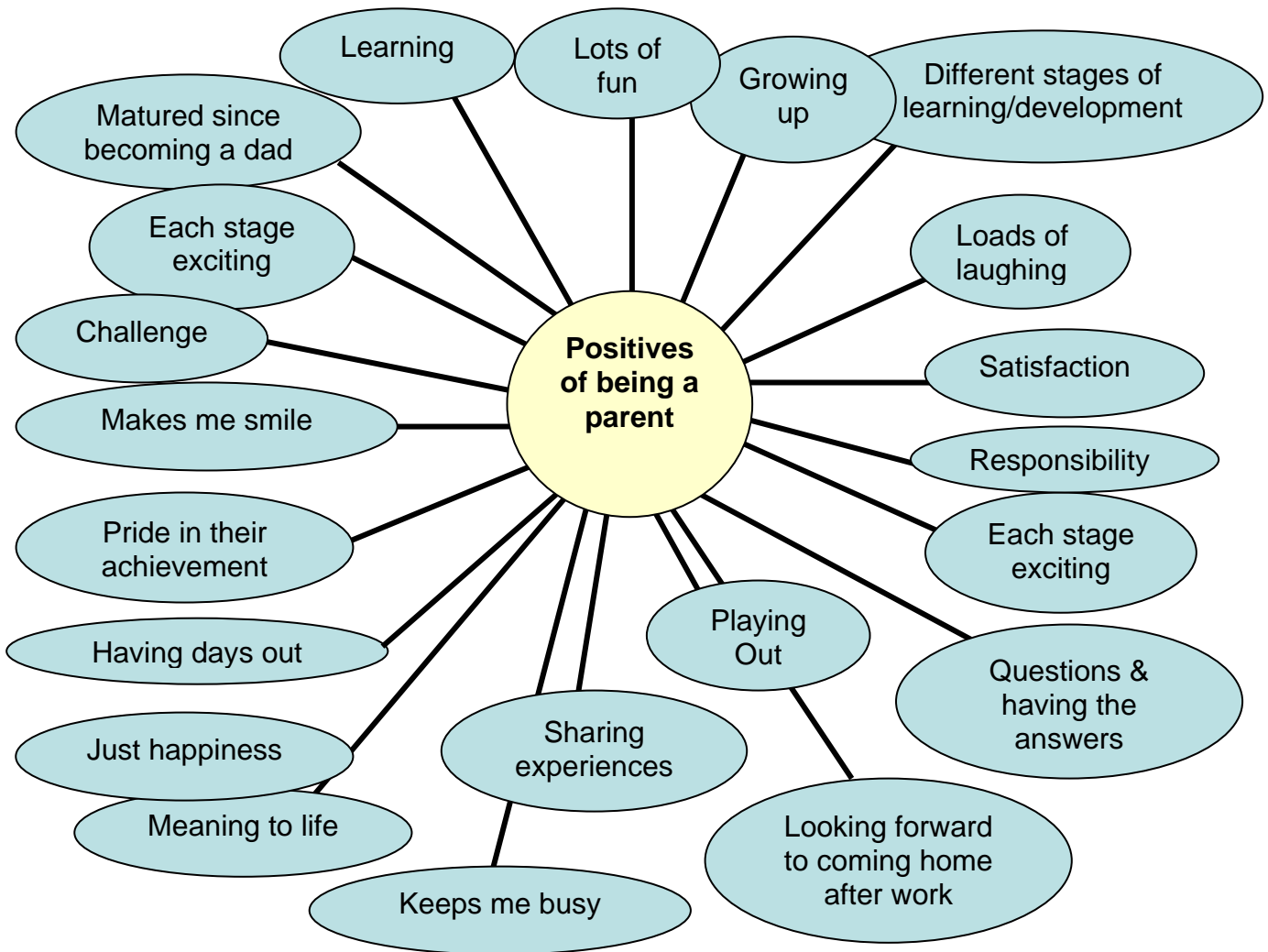
Questions were asked regarding employment to try to achieve a mix of varied backgrounds as well as ensuring no employees of either Kirklees Council or the Kirklees PCT's were recruited. It was not found necessary to use community links to recruit the South Asian Group. Participants were paid a cash incentive at the end of each of the sessions. The groups ran at the Birkby Childrens Centre in the early evening.

Refreshments and introductory steps such as timing, exits etc were explained. Both groups were then asked to introduce themselves and talk briefly about their families. In both groups there was a range of ages, family i.e. ages and number of children and work circumstances.

## Main Findings

### 1 Positives and Negatives of being a Parent

Both groups were asked to think for a moment about the positives and negatives of being a parent and then to write down 3 of each. These have been captured in the diagrams below.





These discussions incorporated life changes, changes in routine and for some fathers their working patterns, this was expanded on in the discussions around father's current role.

## 2 Life Changes

The groups were asked if they felt that their routines had changed since having children, some of the negatives were around their social lives being curtailed and the amount of times they had to get up in the night. One father talked about 'programmed' early mornings even at the weekends or somewhere else without the children. When probed he reflected that:

*"There's more of the day, so in some ways it's quite good. You spend more time at the weekends actually doing things rather than just lying in bed till eleven"*

Both groups talked about changes in working patterns. Some fathers had arranged to work more flexible or fewer hours, either to split the childcare at home or lessen the cost of childcare. Some of the fathers praised their employers for helping them. Others sited unsociable working hours or lack of flexibility as making a difference as to how much time they can spend with their children and pressure on them.

*“.....I would like some more time but I have got to balance money and .....”*

*“ I think it depends on who you work for as well, whether they give you the support or not”*

*“...so it's like a lot of hard work and lot of stress you know, you're always rushing about all over the place and it's very hard sometimes”*

### **3 Current role**

When questioned about what the fathers believed the role and responsibilities to be in raising their children, there were mixed opinions

Some fathers felt that their role was simply that of a provider:

*“Its quite simple and straightforward, it's all I do with the children. I'm very old fashioned and everything, the only responsibility I have is bringing the money home.”*

*“My job is as a provider, and also to give them a better future. I want them to obviously become better than me...”*

...Whereas others felt that it was their responsibility to teach their children

*“Teaching them right from wrong, how you teach them”*

Another father was keen to point out that he felt that the responsibility of raising children was firmly that of parents and not on other people or institutions

*“I feel it's always on the parents how you bring them up, not really the schools...”*

Some fathers felt that the role that they played in their child's life would, or had changed according to the age of the child

*“... I think at the beginning when they're really young there's a special bond with them with their mum, that it's like wrong to try and get in there... and I think that gradually changes a little bit later on so that then as a bloke you can actually get in and do something and you're being more helpful to the whole thing and being more of a parent.”*

Other fathers were keen to agree

*“I think that's what I found as a dad, those first three months were the hardest I think because like you say, the bonds not there with your child. You're still getting pretty tired as a dad but you don't get any recognition for that, it's always “Oh poor mum”, sort of thing...”*

*“Yeah you've got friends coming round, ‘oh I hope he's helping you’ ”*

*“Well it’s a bit difficult for me because mine are quite small and I can’t... but I mean my role is going to change over time. At the moment it’s just giving them a smile and that’s enough because they are so little. Even though you’re getting up like three o’ clock in the morning, I think the role is going to change over time and become more involved and more responsibility”*

When the fathers were probed about differences in the way they were bringing up their children, and the way they had been brought up by their fathers there was a range of answers:

*“I was going to say and I could be wrong, but I don’t remember but I think I’m more involved with their upbringing or day to day stuff like taking them to nursery, collecting them and getting them dressed and feeding them possibly more than my dad was.”*

The amount of time the fathers were spending with their own children seemed to be one of the biggest differences.

*“I mean he never used to give us a lot of time to the kids but he worked really hard and did really well”*

*“I think its being there basically. I mean my dad left when I was about four, four or five. He lived close by but you don’t go home to him, and I’ve always got a bit of a thing about that somehow. So just being there and being consistent in this day and age is quite a good thing”*

The level of respect and discipline also seemed to have changed.

*“Back in the day when I was a small kid my dad used to, if we did anything wrong all he needed to do was give us a look and you would know, ‘Oh I’ve done something wrong,’ but now you can do that however much you like because the kids, they don’t care”*

The way that leisure time was spent was also raised.

*“...they weren’t interested in sports or something like that, but like now we like to introduce our kids to sports and do this and do that activity and that’s the difference”*

#### **4 Daily routine**

Fathers were questioned about the impact of having children on their routines.

*“...I can’t remember a time before I had kids. I can’t imagine having my weekends off and just saying, ‘Oh what can I do’ ”*

*“I vaguely remember at the weekends you just used to just wake up when you wake up, and you don’t and every day’s the same, you just wake up, and even when you go away somewhere else you still wake up at the same time, even if the kids aren’t there any more. That’s just programmed up there, half six, seven o’ clock, get up and sort the kids out. That’s the biggest change I think”*

Some fathers also felt that they no longer had the time to socialise.

*"No more clubbing, no social life"*

*"No social life, none of that."*

*"I mean, being serious, it could be clubbing, it could be whatever you used to do when you didn't have children."*

Other fathers stated that they had made changes to their working patterns.

*"I arranged with work to have like one day off a week. I think we were trying to lessen the cost of childcare a bit so I arranged to have four days at work and one day at home to look after them to kind of spread the workload a bit more."*

*"I've gone on to flexi-time and I'm getting used to that"*

Other fathers felt that having children had not only changed their routines but their behaviour also.

*"I stick to the speed limit now when the kids are in the car. I never used to before – well I never used to notice but now I always do when my kids are in the car, yeah."*

*"Well that's a really good one actually; I still do when the kids aren't even in the car. I do now because you think, 'Well what if you crash and die, what's going to happen to your kids?' and it is in the back of your mind"*

### **Daily routine - Child**

When trying to gauge the level of participation the fathers had in their children's daily routine there were different levels of involvement.

Some fathers had no contact with their children in the mornings due to their employment.

*"On my average day I'll get up for work on a morning, go to work. (Child), he doesn't really wake up till I don't know, probably about nine o'clock in a morning so I don't really see him on a morning"*

*"He wakes up about eightish, something like that, and I start at half seven so no, I see him when I get home."*

Other fathers had both pre and post work involvement.

*"Basically I get up in the morning. I get to see them for half an hour... And then obviously I work long days, so about six o'clock I get home, we have our tea together and then they get in the bath... and then I'll just go see them before they go to bed"*

The non-working fathers seemed to have a greater involvement in the day-to-day activities.

*“Get him up and myself, get our breakfast and try to think of something to do, usually maybe go to the toddler group or playgroup, he goes to playgroup a couple of mornings a week. Get back home, fix his dinner, try and think of something to do in the afternoon, maybe go to the park or visit a friend or something, go shopping.”*

There were concerns from some fathers around the “quality time” that was spent with their children

*“...it’s like you’re so tired that you feel like you’re being a bit of a negative with them. I always spend time with him but sometimes its like, oh I haven’t quite got the energy to do it.”*

*“If I can I’ll play with them when I get home if I haven’t any work to do, otherwise I really have to start to do work and I go for the easy option and put the TV on, but I’d rather play with them for that hour.”*

## **5 Leisure Time**

Fathers were asked about their leisure time and this brought about mixed responses that included both time on their own and time with their children.

*“... I drink at night-clubs ...”, “Or go on the Internet now and then.” “ ...a bit of snooker now and then you know”*

*“Basically they want to do everything with you. They want to watch TV; they want to watch a video. It depends on what you want to do, but they want to do everything with you because they are into everything when they’re two years old or three years old.”*

*“I go to the allotment but (child) comes with me. But that’s nice, a nice time for us, and I do find it relaxing as well, and I’m still doing childcare.”*

Other dads pointed out that they didn’t have as much time as before they had children and some felt leisure time was for catching up on sleep.

*“Excuse me, what’s leisure time?” “it seems to reflect on how your life has personally changed” , “I catch up on sleep... because I need to, it just wears you out, you know, getting up at the crack of dawn every day, sometimes two or three times a night so yes.”*

One of the fathers hoped to spend more time with his children as they got older and was planning on getting them involved quite soon.

*“In the summer on a Sunday the day’s my own and I go off and do a lot of (hobby), so pretty selfish in that respect. But later in life I also see us like, if I keep doing it now and they are getting interested where I go and they want to go and see what I do, then they will get involved and it will be something that we can do together later on. Any day now really they can start.”*

## 6 Concerns about child development

### Health & Physical

When asked about their children's health & physical development, most fathers could talk about their past experiences in particular dealing with concerns for the first time. These consisted of taking their children to either the doctors or the hospital, and the quality of these visits varied.

*"My third child was born with a hole in the heart and the concerns that I had was with the medical profession... they were so sort of nonchalant about it, they were, 'Oh it's only a hole in the heart, it'll heal up.' I understand their point of view as well, you know, they probably see a hundreds babies a day but for me it was the first time..."*

*"My eldest had bowel trouble and at times we used to have to put suppositories and stuff and he didn't like it, so he had an operation which cured him, so he's alright."*

Another father mentioned that he had conflicting advice from health professionals.

*"My first child, he had meningitis when he was only three months old. He was wrongly diagnosed. The first time round when we called the doctor, they took him to the hospital, they still mis-diagnosed him. In the evening we got so worried we called another doctor out and he told us to rush down to the hospital. Now he's deaf."*

Fathers also discussed feeling hurt when seeing their children in hospital.

*"We got help from the hospital, the doctors and everything like that, but it was a painful time because the kid was in pain, you see."*

When asked to think about other physical development concerns, fathers talked about exercise and diet being important but felt that the media pressure didn't help.

*"I'm always worried that my kids never get enough exercise and we might not be feeding them right, but I usually tell myself, you know, they get a balanced diet at nursery and we try and give them fruit and try and take them for a run and things. It's just something in the back of your head, I always keep it in, what with all the media pressure on obesity and whatnot, you know."*

In order to address concerns, fathers stated that they would use their local GP/Doctor, Health Visitors, or the NHS direct.

### Social & Emotional

Fathers were then asked about any social and emotional development concerns that they may have had with their children. In one of the groups this was seen as a balance between allowing children freedom and keeping them safe.

*"I suppose it's about that balance of giving them the freedom of being able to play out on the street but knowing that that's the pavement and that's the road and if the ball goes in the road, then you stop before chasing out, that sort of stuff. But no, thinking about it, but they've got to play as well haven't they and find things out and work it out for themselves, but yes, at the end it's the worry."*

*"What gets me though when you look at the roads is, it's somebody who's bombing up and down the roads you know have got kids and you'd think they'd actually understand that you've got worries about your kids being on the road"*

Again the problem of having no safe places for children to play arose here, as did speeding cars in the area.

*"the fact that there is nowhere for them to play safely, that's why they're on the roads, you know, they're on the pavements kicking a ball around because where else can you go?"*

One participant felt that 'stranger danger' is not a problem in Birkby.

*"I wouldn't worry too much about the stranger danger, just as long as your children know the basic rules."*

The fathers felt that to address their concerns safer parks and play areas should be available and the community needed to act to make this happen.

*"If people are concerned about facilities like the parks and their concerns are just like things getting cleaned up but nothing's being done, they should contact their local councilors to get those concerns passed on."*

*"It's not so much my kid will go on it (broken bottle) it'll be some other kid will walk on it, that's how I see it. Their kid, my kid, they all play in the park"*

Teachers were mentioned to deal with social development problems.

*"Well if you've got worries you can ask the teacher and the teacher will more or less know which numbers to ring to get further information."*

One of the fathers in the South Asian focus group mentioned a social development concern being his child's speech but was unaware of where to get help to address this.

*"I've got a small concern about my son, he can't speak proper, he pronounces his words different like lead door instead of red door, lean instead of green, but he's still young."*

This parent was asked where he thought he would go for help if he felt the problem was still with the child at the age of four.

*"I don't really know, because I haven't really thought about it."*

## 7 Service Development

The groups were asked to look at how they would go about designing an ideal service, relating to their local or family concerns. Some clarification was needed in both groups as to what they were to consider. Initially one of the groups discussions centered on a type of health provision.

*“Well somewhere where everything is, you know, in the same place. Somewhere that explains to parents in layman’s speech about issues, say about behaviour or speech, dyslexia, that sort of stuff”*

Another father in the same group expanded on this theme

*“Especially where somebody understands your cultural life as well”*

A specific example of something going wrong regarding a child’s development was referred to within this discussion, which led one member of the group to call for more training and expertise for any staff.

Further probing about the ideal place for these services led one of the group to talk about the centre the focus group was being held in.

*“I think this (Birkby Children’s Centre) is probably one of them, isn’t it?.....”*

Some of the other dads were in agreement as to how the community appreciated this facility and one of the fathers stated that although this was the first time he had been in the building

*“.....I only just live down the street but when I was getting told that it was quite good, you know, for local people to bring their kids along and all that”*

On further probing the reasons were because it is local and convenient. When asked about anything that would encourage fathers in particular to bring their children along, difficulties were envisaged when trying to meet with other adults or trying to get information when their children were with them;

*“No, because they (the children) wouldn’t even let you stand still for two minutes....”*

It was felt a nursery would address this.

Both groups worried about drugs within the community, looked at what other activities could be promoted, and also considered the lack of facilities.

*“...but what have we got at the moment, nothing. You know, where can they go to play football or cricket?”*

Other dads from the same group talked about these facilities being for the whole community

*“So that everybody can get together...”*

*“A multi cultural system”*

There was then further discussion around the need for activities for children and young people but that this should be supervised in some way, one suggestion is for a couple of police officers to be in the area. One of the groups suggested activities being led by a paid motivator supported by local families.

*“Yes, perhaps like get some play workers and then get local people involved”*

Within this group the ideas around an ideal service relating to concerns they have about the general safety of their children. Also considering the conflict of opinion within the group about the local park two ideas emerged. The first idea talked about was a local library/community center and ideas around the local park. There was a general discussion in one of the groups around the need for a library, specifically a mobile one. It was discovered during this conversation that there is a mobile library provision in the area. However there was a lack of awareness within the group about the location and timing of the mobile library. Going on from this the group talked about having a ‘fixed’ local library and general discussion about how this could benefit the local community. When asked how they would design it to make it work for them and their families various suggestions were put forward

*“I suppose you could combine a play area, you know, a playgroup within it, that could work, you know you had a big centre and you could put a library in...”*

There was then further discussion around whether it would be specifically for children or the whole community. Combining the library with a gathering point where different activities would be held as well as being local information point.

*“.... A community type centre, so, you know they held classes there and you could do karate or...”*

There were different opinions about community feeling or the lack of it. This was felt to be related to lack of time to interact or dependant on the type of area or housing.

The second idea talked about was around utilising the local park, based on the assumption that the difficulties around litter, broken glass, needles (as previously discussed) had been overcome.

*“...on a weekend you could have a couple of play organisers, that sort of thing, people who are really good at working with kids and getting kids to work together and play together.....”*

*“...the people are already here, do you know what I mean, the resources are already here, the kids and the space (Local Park) is already there, but can it just be used a bit more imaginatively perhaps.”*

It was recognised within this group that there would be practical points to consider, that the timing would need to be flexible and the lack of toilet facilities would need to be addressed. That said there was general feeling that local people would naturally involve themselves.

*“If people don’t feel as if they’re having to do it they’ll often naturally just get involved, you know, like .....Oh yeah, I’ll give you a hand, I’ll stay for another hour.....”*

*“It’s just a bit like an outdoor tunnel group really”*

## 8. Current Services

Leading on from the discussions around designing an ideal service the groups were asked to think about current services for children.

Whereas one group struggled to name any services the other came up with the following list;

Social Services, Health Visitors, Schools, Toddler Groups, Playgroups, Nursery

Within the groups there was some discussion and confusion about some activities/services around timing, information and sometimes the personality's of the people delivering the service. Also dads felt services were targeted more towards the mother.

*"Well they're all important in that they help to keep Mum sane"*

*"It's probably just our society, the norm being that the mothers being more the primary carer generally....."*

*"Is there a parent and baby group here?"*

*"It's usually for women because they run roundabout the same time when people are at work and its mothers turning up"*

The positives of attending activities/groups were felt to be;

*" ... It's free and you can get advice from other people who are in a similar situation or who have done it before. A bit of adult conversation is good."*

*"It's (Playgroup) a good place for kids to develop their own personalities..."*

*".....they (Midwives) actually come and teach you a lot of things you wouldn't know or think about"*

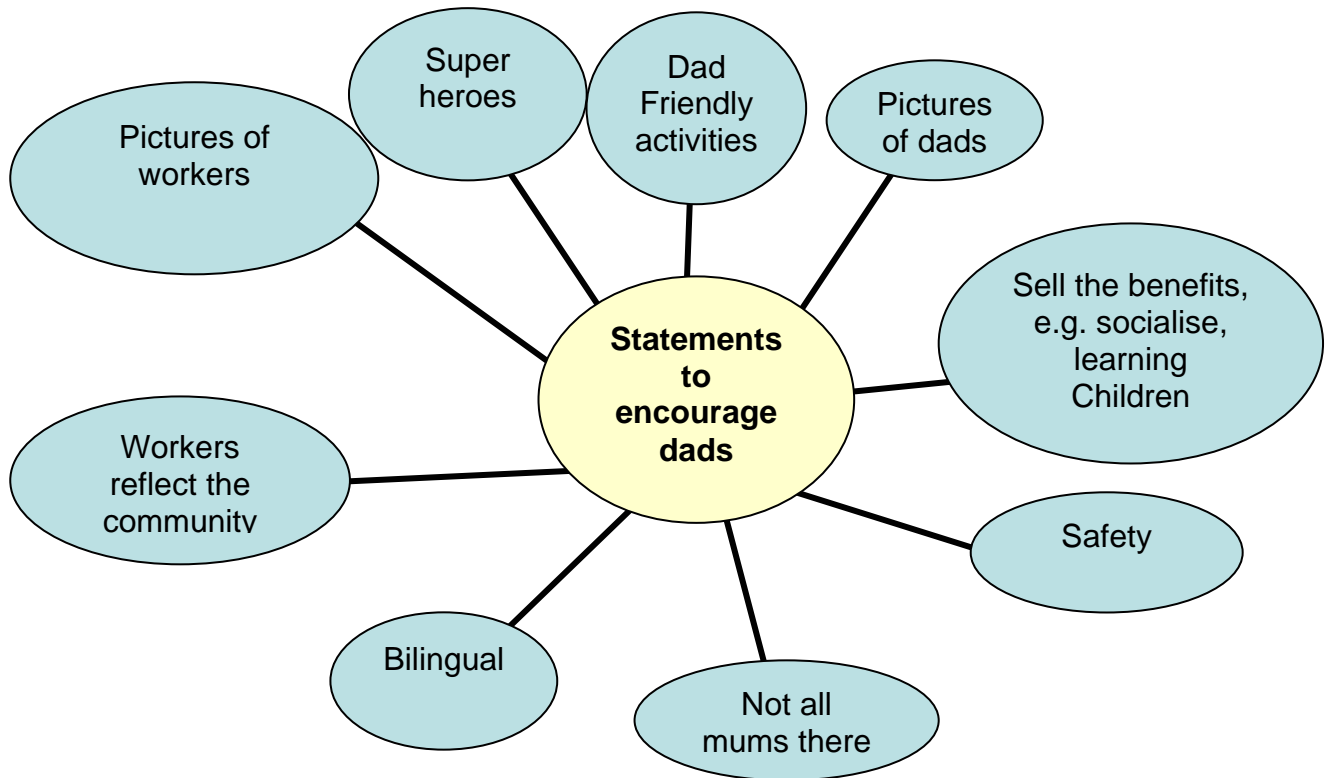
When asked how important some of these services were to them and if they would be prepared to pay for them (purely as a probe to demonstrate importance) it was noted that they are already paying through taxes and that playgroups charge as do private nurseries and play gyms. Some felt that if necessary they would have to make a priority to pay for the midwife and health visitor service because of the potential risks if not.

A list of services was drawn up and the groups were asked to call out any association they had with these services along with whether they were aware or had used the service this is shown in the following table:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Aware/used service</b>	<b>Comments/association</b>
<b>Parent &amp; Baby Group Parent &amp; toddler</b>	3 at least aware	During the day Time e.g. when people work Mother Women Unsure for which age For under 1's, under 3's, under 5's Talking to fellow parents
<b>Playgroups</b>	6 at least aware	Develop personality Interaction Going with the kids Paintings
<b>Midwife</b>	All aware	Aimed at mother Good service Tell you things you don't know For 1 <sup>st</sup> time? For each time
<b>Infant Massage Class</b>	2 aware 1 attendee	Colic Word of mouth Doesn't pull you in Not everyone had heard of this Personal view of health professional Held at the chestnut centre Health visitors/midwives Colic Relaxing the baby Advertise more
<b>Breastfeeding support group</b>		Lack of information No opinion from South Asian Group
<b>Antenatal Class</b>	6 aware 7 attended	Attended first time not second Useful
<b>Baby Clinic</b>		No comments were elicited
<b>Health Visitor Home Visit</b>	Most aware 11 had visit	A few were around Reassuring Not around Provides support Dependant on family circumstances Talked to Dad
<b>Parenting support group or classes</b>		No comments were elicited
<b>Nursery</b>		No comments were elicited
<b>Babies into Books</b>		Enjoyed it Needs more info/advertising

## 10 Statements to promote fathers involvement in childcare development

The final exercise in the focus groups asked fathers to think of three statements to promote fathers involvement in services that support child development. Suggestions were written on a flip chart and included:



Showing pictures of workers that represent the community was mentioned in both focus groups.

Fathers talked about promoting father and child activities adding that services are generally aimed at mothers. Benefits of services could also be promoted including play and learning, and socialising.

*“Yes, you feel pressure don’t you because like all the mums are there and all the dads seem to be a bit – there needs to be like more dad friendly places.”*

*“You’ve got to make it fun for the parent and the kid at the same time, because if one’s happy and the other one’s not one will want to go back and the other one won’t. So if the dad’s happy and the kid’s not, dad will want to go back anyway, ‘Come on, you’re going anyway, I need you to go’.”*

*“If you want to pull people in, if you want to pull parents in, dads, if you can sell it as ‘this is going to help your child’s development, this is going to make them a better person’”*

*“So like maybe you’d want to sort of say, ‘Get your kids out and meeting other kids’ and that sort of thing, but that’s just, you know, either you’re into that as parents or not.”*  
South Asian fathers highlighted the need for posters to be bilingual.

After talking about how to promote services to target dads, some fathers questioned the need to take part in services at all, particularly when their children were already getting support.

*“now they’re at nursery full-time I feel that they’re getting all the social interaction with the other kids their own age and all the stimulation, that you can always have a bit of a chill time, just family time, at the weekend, you don’t need to ... we do things like go swimming with them, take them to the park, things like that, but you don’t need to have such a formalised thing. That’s probably why at the moment I wouldn’t go to playgroups at the weekend. “*

*“They do enough during the week, the weekend’s family time, it’s the time that I get off so I’ll just be with them and not round other playgroups I suppose.”*

## Conclusion

This report aims to gain insight into the needs of fathers in Birkby, looking at the father's role, any gaps in engaging fathers and characteristics of current services and activities from the father's perspective. The findings will be used to understand what the issues are in engaging father's and how these can be addressed and the characteristics that appropriate services may need to have.

Before looking at the key findings it is worth noting the limitations of the focus group. Whereas it may be thought that the criteria for the participants having children under 5 would produce participants of similar ages there was found to be differences in the age ranges within both groups and possibly a focus group of teenage fathers may have encouraged the younger members of the groups to participate more. The methodology was qualitative in trying to find the reasons behind what fathers thought; It would be beneficial to combine these findings with representative quantitative data to be able generalise more widely about the target population.

Key findings include:

### Positives and Negatives of being a parent

There seemed to be an equal balance between the 'good' and 'bad' side of having children. The emotions and feelings voiced ranged from giving a meaning to their lives, happiness etc right through to loss of freedom, tiredness and endless worry. Also the maturity and chance to watch and learn through the different stages of development by being able to answer questions gave great satisfaction. A lot of the discussions around the negative side of being a parent focused on the lack of places to go and the balancing of home and work whilst trying to find time for socialising, themselves and their partners.

### Role and responsibilities

There were mixed opinions about the role and responsibilities that the fathers felt they had in their children's lives. Some saw their role as being simply that of a provider, whereas others felt that it was to educate them about the differences in right and wrong. There was an agreement from many of the fathers that their role would, or had changed as their child had developed so they could become more involved. Some fathers indicated a sense of being left out in the earlier months of their children's lives. The majority of fathers also noted a change in their role compared to their own father's regarding issues such as amount of time spent with their children, and respect and discipline.

### Impact on routine and any life changes

All the fathers were in agreement that the impact their children had had on their lives and routines had been substantial. There were changes to some of the fathers work patterns, a lack of or reduction in the time spent socialising and also a change in their general behaviour.

### Daily routine

There were different levels of involvement from the fathers in their children's day-to-day activities and this seemed to be linked to the employment status of the father. The quality of time that was spent with their children was also raised by some of the fathers, who felt that they could not always spend the time they had with their children, the way they would like due to work commitments or because they were tired from being at work all day.

### Leisure time

Fathers gave mixed responses about how they spent their leisure time but there were similarities in that their leisure time has changed. Some pointed out that they had less leisure time for themselves and others spent their leisure time with their children.

### Concerns about child development

In this section fathers talked about their involvement when dealing with concerns about their children's health. This included positive and negative experiences of health services. The media was also mentioned as exaggerating problems surrounding exercise and nutrition. When talking about social and emotional development the issue of safety was discussed in terms of places for children to play outside of the home.

### Service Development

Both groups discussed the need for activities for children and young people, a local community library/centre, a health provision with everything under one roof, where questions can be answered in layman's terms and different cultures are understood. The discussions about safety of children in the area led to the fathers describing ideas of utilising the local amenities with some practical improvements by involving families through a paid motivator.

### Current Services

Comments were invited on awareness of current services and any associations that came to mind. One group struggled to come up with many services while another group couldn't mention any. The services that dads were most aware of were mainstream services and included Social Services, Health Visitors, Schools, Toddler Groups, Playgroups, and Nursery. The importance of timing, information and individual's personality came into the discussion along with the feeling that some services were very 'mother' orientated. But generally attending groups was seen as positive.

### Statements to promote fathers involvement in childcare development

When asked to come up with three statements to encourage fathers to become involved in services to promote child development, fathers suggested promoting more father friendly activities that can benefit children. They also talked about showing the activities and staff members that reflect the community on the poster. This led to a discussion about the need for such services if children were already getting interaction anyway.

## **Recommendations**

When thinking about engaging dads, it is important to take into consideration their perceptions of current services. Initial ideas from the focus groups suggest that dads view activities as being aimed at women.

In the focus groups dads described their ideal service addressing local concerns of children's safety in the area. They also described the detail of specific community activities, for example play worker led activities, as well as more general community facilities.

Dads gave clear examples of what would encourage them to become involved and these would need to be considered in the promotion of any service or activity.

Further work needs to be done to establish what would make services father friendly and culturally appropriate and how to promote these services.

It is unclear as to the most appropriate time to offer services and whether 'extra curricular activities' are always needed. Conflicting views emerged from the focus groups about service provision i.e. there was a perception that services were available during working hours and more available to women. There was uncertainty as to the age groups that the activities are aimed at.

These issues may be worthy of further investigation.

These points need to be taken into consideration when trying to engage dads in the area in planning and developing services appropriate to their needs.

This report helps to emphasise the importance of consulting with service users when planning to develop activities and services and the need to continue this process. It has also identified key concerns that fathers have bringing up their children and how they would like to be supported.