

# CARDIFF FLYING START

## ENGAGING WITH FATHERS - MESSAGES FROM OUR RESEARCH

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# Workshop Aims



- Give an overview of Cardiff Flying Start
- Explain the reasons behind the research
- Present findings & recommendations that came out of the work
- Consider next steps & participants to offer suggestions
- Participants to consider whether their area of work is as father friendly as it could be
- To facilitate debate around how to better engage fathers

# What is 'Flying Start'?



- **Welsh Assembly Government Initiative**
- **Complimentary, building on some elements of Sure Start, but more targeted and specific**
- **Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- **Within each local authority in Wales**
- **The most significantly 'deprived' and 'disadvantaged' areas, identified through a variety of measures**

# The Programme



- Aimed at birth – 3years 11 months age group
- Initially capped at 2070 children – already approaching 2500
- 8 primary school catchment areas based around prescriptive postcodes within each area
- 4 strands of service development
- From 2006 - March 2011

# Outcomes

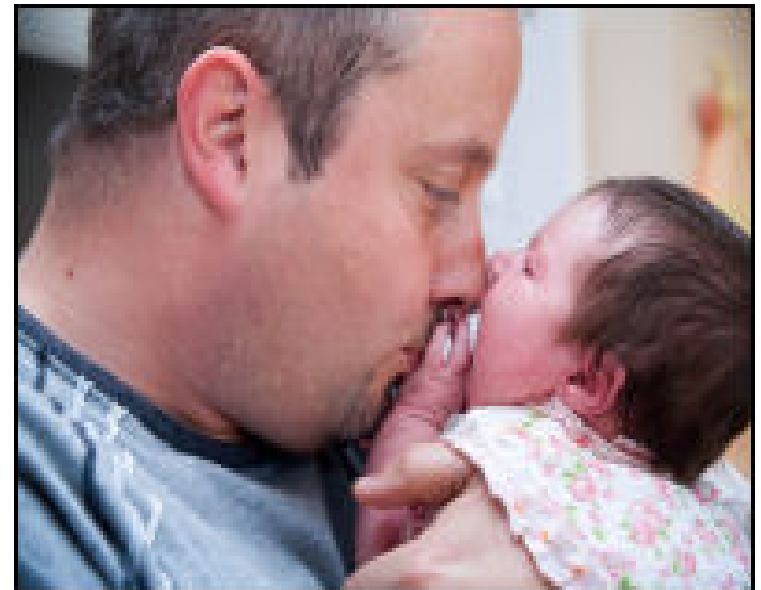
**Physical health**  
**Language**  
**Early identification**  
**Cognitive**  
**Social/Emotional**

– **Long Term:**

**Reduction - poor skills**

**Reduction - family breakdown**

**Reduction - poor child/maternal health**



# Flying Start - Key Components



- Free part time childcare for 2-3yr olds
- Intensive and enhanced Health services
- Parenting Programmes
- Basic Skills - language and play



# Quality childcare provision

- Staffing levels
- Modelling good practice
- Contractual arrangements
- CSSIW Registration
- Relationships and training
- Early Curriculum
- Enhanced environment
- Quality equipment and resources



# Health Services



- **Health visiting - a trusted universal service within the home**
- **Vital first contact for families, linking with parents (mums and dads) and midwifery pre-birth**
- **Lower HV caseloads 1:110**
- **More intense HV for families in greatest need**
- **Skill mix approach – Family Health Workers and clear training expectations of staff**
- **Multi disciplinary working with Speech and Language Therapists and Dietitians**

# Parenting Programmes

- **Parents Plus (Parenting Positively)**
- **Parent Nurturing Programme**
- **Neonatal Behavioural Assessment Scale (Brazleton - NBAS)**



# Language & Play



## Aims

- To show the importance that speaking and listening has on the development of a child's language
- To explore the power of play with parents
- To discuss how adults can use play to scaffold children's language
- To show parents that what we give to children to play with can make a difference to their language development

# Specialist Work

- Fathers Development Worker
- Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
- Adams Court Homeless Hostel
- Gypsy Travellers



# Context – Cardiff's Fathers Work



Including Fathers in Early Years Services: Positive Practice for Professionals. Children in Wales October 2008

This identifies that positive father involvement contributes to:

- Higher educational attainment
- Fewer behavioural problems
- Better peer relations
- Less likelihood of engaging in offending behaviour
- Reduced levels of substance abuse
- Higher self esteem
- Increased occupational mobility

# Where did the work come from?



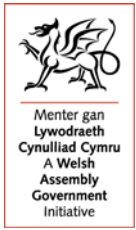
- Recognition that working with dads can be challenging across the Programme, yet hugely beneficial to young children
- Engagement strategically with Wales wide Fathers Forum
- Development of All Wales Guidelines
- Availability of funding on a short term basis to end March
- Future plans within Flying Start and the need for 'baseline' information relating to numbers of dads

# What did we want to know?



- If 89% of fathers are present at the birth of their child, then why don't we see more fathers engaged with Early Years Services?
- The Flying Start research study was designed primarily to identify the barriers to engagement faced by fathers in the 8 Cardiff Flying Start catchment areas.

# HOW DID WE GO ABOUT IT?



- Identified funding
- Developed job description and person specification based around the intended outcome of the work and the client population
- Advertised, interviewed, recruited
- Mark Ball in post on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2009
- Plan of work – very tight timescale (4 wks!!)

# BARRIERS? What Barriers?



The 'assumptions' were:

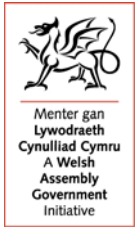
- that the numbers of fathers engaging in Flying Start generally reflected those accessing early years services across the UK – we needed to either confirm or dismiss this
- that Flying Start staff generally, do not engage with fathers as much we would like them to – we needed to see if this was true

# Methodology



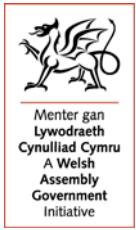
- Plan was to identify as many Flying Start fathers to 'interview' as possible through:
  - linking with Health Visitors who already have contact with a limited number of fathers
  - attending Health Visitor baby clinics to link with mothers (and fathers where present)
  - linking with the existing Dad's Group at the Ely and Caerau Childrens Centre
  - ask the Dietetic Team to discuss the project in their service groups

# Methodology Cont'd



- Identify the perceptions of Flying Start practitioners across the Programme by:
  - speaking at Flying Start forums
  - linking with Flying Start catchment teams
  - speaking to service managers within the Programme
  - generally engaging with colleagues across the Flying Start programme

# Information gathered through:



- Semi structured interviews
- Informal and formal conversations with staff
- Focus Groups
  - Sample group of 21 individual fathers aged between 21 and 52;
  - 48% unemployed
  - 29% (6) from BME communities
- Despite attempts to engage specifically with young fathers, they were prepared to talk to Mark 'off the record' but none were willing for their comments to be included in the report

# What did we find out?



- Barriers
- Other messages for service deliverers
- Some statistics to use as a baseline
- Suggestions for a way forward
  - Further research
  - Development of father friendly services

# Reported Barriers



- Dad's tell us that **work** is the greatest barrier to engagement – although it is indicated that what fathers *say* conflicts with the statistics
- Many feel that **fathers themselves** are a barrier in terms of their willingness to engage for a variety of reasons
- Some fathers believe that a **lack of information** about services is a barrier

# Barriers Cont'd



- Some fathers believe that ***lifestyle choices*** such as substance misuse and criminality are a barrier
- Some fathers believe that ***ex partners*** are a barrier – for a variety of reasons
- Some fathers believe that ***gender issues*** are a barrier
- Some fathers believe that a ***lack of amenities*** is a barrier

# Other Messages



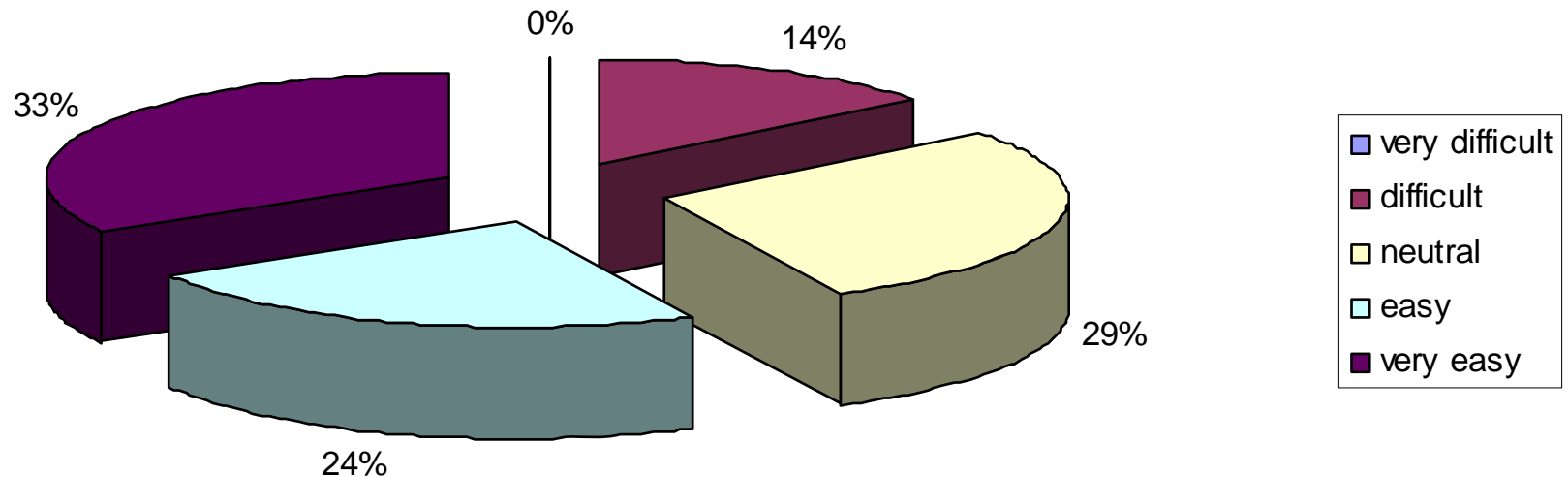
- Work as a barrier also means not in employment and the impact of this on self esteem and time taken to search for work
- Services unwittingly exclude fathers through their 'female focus' both environmentally and in terms of workforce balance (95% female workforce)
- Economic deprivation in itself is a barrier – do our services appear to be 'middle class' and therefore inaccessible?
- It is possible that the early experiences of some fathers with educational institutions has led to future non engagements
- The relationship of the father with his own father is also indicative of future parenting

# Some Statistics



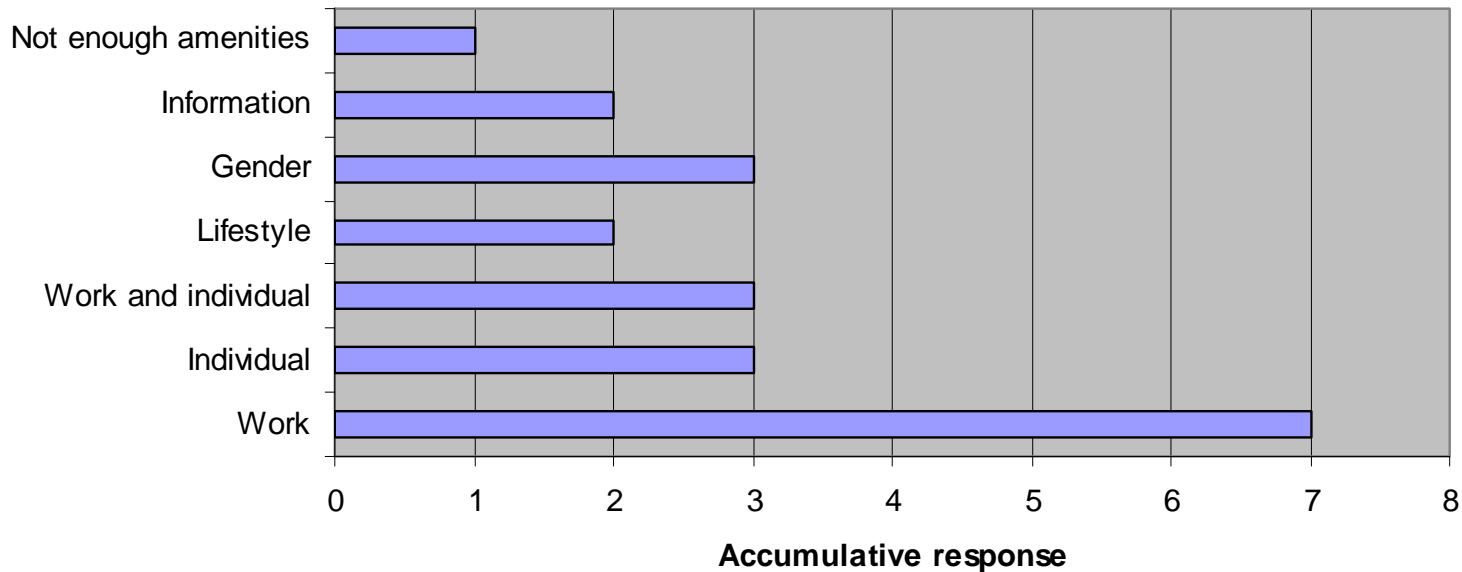
- 95% of fathers interviewed see their role as 'very important'
- 66% reported that their child's health visitor had 'spoken' to them
- 25% reported 'no contact' whatsoever with their child's health visitor
- 25% felt that changing the hours of working or service delivery would enable their involvement
- 48% had either 'no idea' or 'some idea' of what Flying Start actually is

# How easy is it for dads to get involved with their children



Thirty three percent (33%) of the dads interviewed expressed the view that it was very easy to get involved with their children. Fourteen percent (14%) found it difficult to become engaged with their children. In addition, twenty four percent (24%) felt that it was very difficult. Thus we can see that almost fifty percent (50%) of fathers asked were either neutral or found difficulties in getting involved with their children.

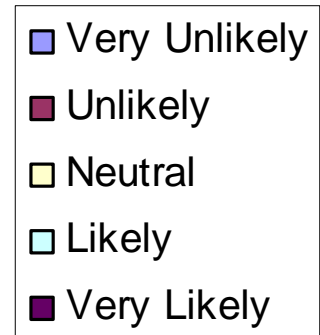
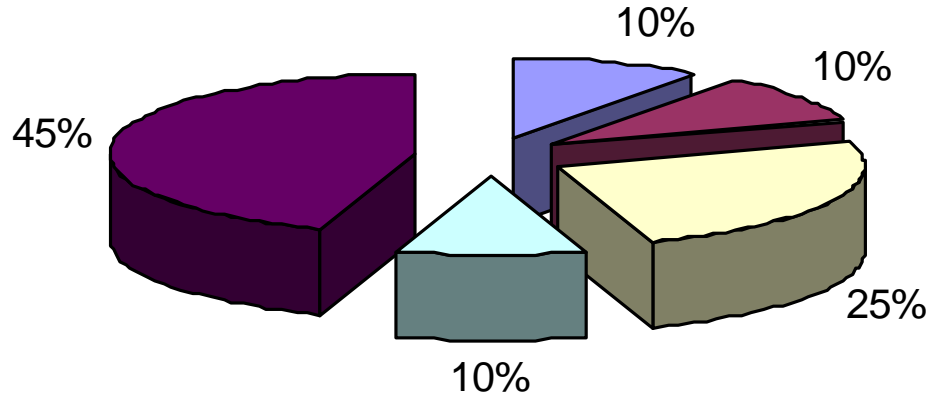
# Barriers



(33%) of those asked identified work as a barrier between themselves and their children. Another fourteen percent (14%) believed that the fathers themselves are the barrier due to a lack of effort where their children were concerned. Fourteen percent (14%) of those interviewed explained that they saw both work and the individual as a barrier, i.e. although working hours are a hindrance it is up to the individual father to make time for their children. For them, it is a mixture of the two variables.

Lifestyle choices such as substance misuse, alcohol consumption, gambling and crime were identified as a barrier by ten percent (10%). 66% cited partners from previous relationships or gender-related issues as a barrier between dads and children

# How likely is it that you would attend a play group session



Forty five percent (45%) of all the participants that took part in the study anticipated that it would be very likely that they would attend a play group/stay and play with their children; but only twenty percent (20%) of participants already do so, 20% reported it was either unlikely or very unlikely.

# The Way Forward - Research



We've identified that further work needs to be undertaken around the following:

- Teenage Dads
- Fathers who are young offenders
- How non residency of fathers impacts on their children
- Ethnicity
- The gender bias
- Lifestyle choices and status challenges
- Mothers as the gatekeepers between early years services and fathers

# The Way Forward – Father Friendly Services



- Making explicit attempts to engage fathers
- Not marginalising non resident fathers
- Increasing the numbers of male staff
- Working with fathers to develop welcoming environments in all settings
- Consider developing father only elements to services and publicising this widely
- Recognition that fathers are sometimes viewed with suspicion – therefore work to combat this
- Acknowledging and challenging cultural constraints
- Recognition of mothers as ‘gatekeepers’
- Being available outside normal working hours

# Impact of Flying Start

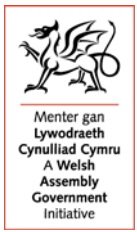


***“If the evaluation of this programme establishes that its’ intended benefits are being realised, there will be a powerful base of evidence in Wales to support making these services available in many more communities.”***

WAG Flying Start Guidance 2006

**We see this as an opportunity to influence how mainstream early years services are provided to fathers in the future**

# So Far We Have:-



- Identified that the overall baseline number of fathers currently engaged with our Flying Start Services is 5%!!!
- Included father specific material in Family Information Packs given to parents on registration
- Challenged issues relating to parental responsibility and whether fathers can sign off informed parental consent forms if they are not married to the child's mother
- Appointed to the Fathers post for this financial year – post holder about to start work

# Any questions



09-09-2009 Cardiff Flying Start

# Discussion Points



- Have you heard anything in this presentation that has surprised you?
- Any suggestions that might help us implement the necessary changes?
- Any thoughts on the further research areas?
- Could you be more father friendly in your work?
- How can service providers engage more effectively with Dads?

# Contact Details



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