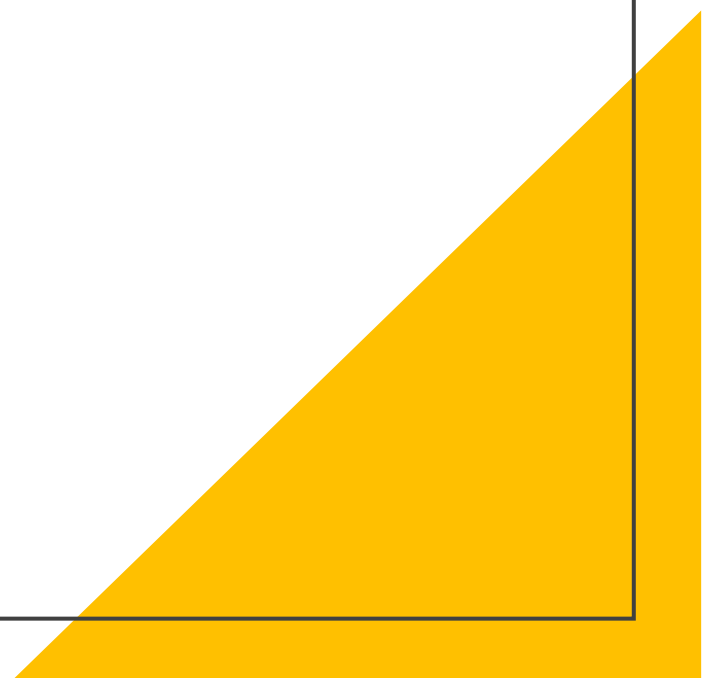


Working with men

Across the life course



Reflective questions

Why do we need a session on working with men at all?

Why is it helpful to talk about working with men? Or is it?

When we think about working with men, do we have a particular group in mind?

Do we associate certain men with risk, and are other groups of men invisible to us as men?



Thinking across the life course



Understanding

Understanding gender in the context of age, class, ethnicity, sexuality and disability

Thinking

Thinking intersectionality ... why Covid-19 has reinforced this and what does it mean?

Working with boys and young men

- A study with 50 young men involved with services were asked about what makes a good worker
- 'It's not just a job' – the importance of relationships
- Working 'alongside' – the importance of context
- Place matters
- Gender mattered... it did but then it did not ... the paradox of being everywhere but nowhere!

Mental health

- A lot of assumptions about men and mental health
- Dominant constructions of being a man would seem to run counter to what is understood to be good mental health ...
- Failing to live up to particular constructions is often very problematic
- [Men and mental health | Mental Health Foundation](#)

Men and suicide

- [Supporting less well-off, middle-aged men | Our policy and research | Samaritans](#)
- Factors-
- Personality traits
- Masculinity
- Challenges of mid-life
- Relationship breakdown
- Emotional illiteracy
- Socio-economic factors

Mental health

- [British BAME men's mental health suffers most in Covid crisis | Coronavirus | The Guardian](#)
- Black and Minority Ethnic men reported a deterioration of about 14% in their mental health from 2017-2019 to April 2020, but for white British males the deterioration was smaller at about 6.5%.
- Women also struggled with their mental health during lockdown, experiencing a similar drop-off in their mental health to BAME men, but ethnicity was not found to have played a significant role.

Men and suicide in recession

- [Impact of 2008 global economic crisis on suicide: time trend study in 54 countries | The BMJ](#)
- After the 2008 economic crisis, rates of suicide increased in the European and American countries studied, particularly in men and in countries with higher levels of job loss.
- Implications for services....

Men, mental health and services

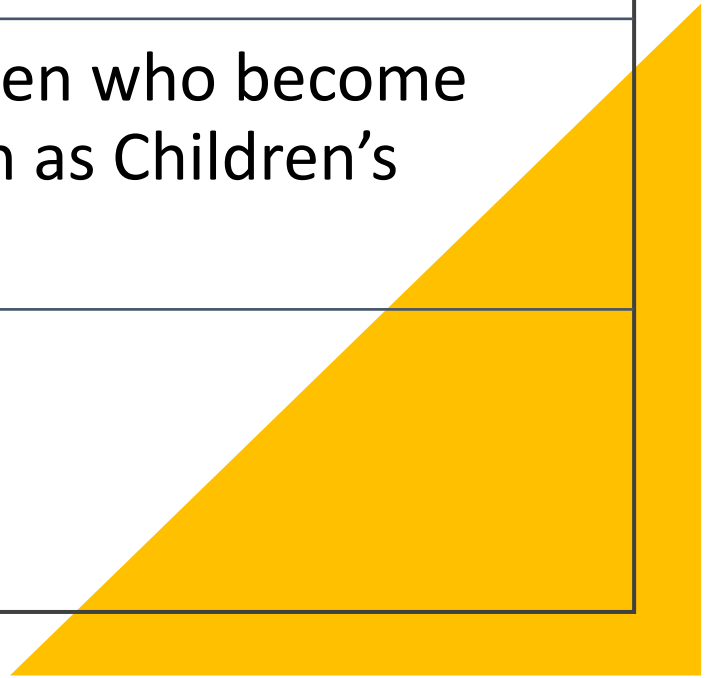
- Samaritans have created five principles for wellbeing initiatives,
 1. Use activities to facilitate conversation
 2. Be welcoming and accessible
 3. Communicate clearly
 4. Foster meaningful relationships over time
 5. Foster a sense of achievement

Working with men in families

Let's talk about fathers firstly

What does the evidence tell us about their importance to children?

What do we know about men who become involved with agencies such as Children's Services?



The importance of fathers

Michael Lamb, one of the foremost researchers in this area, has noted a shift since the 1970s in the perceived importance of the role of fathers.



Before then, fathers were seen primarily as breadwinners and 'play-mates'. They were seen as psychologically peripheral to their children while mothers were considered the primary attachment figures.



When parents divorced, the idea of a 'clean break' from the birth father was influential and it was thought a stepfather could take the place of a birth father without problems.

Culture and context

Fathers play many roles in their children's lives and influence their children in ways that vary from family to family, depending on the expectations and aspirations of individual parents, their culture and communities.

Family context

- Family context is often at least as important as individual relationships within the family. Positive paternal influences are more likely to occur not only when there are supportive father child relationships, but when a father's relationships with partner, ex-partner and other children are also positive

Couple- relationships

The Early Intervention Foundation (2016) emphasises the importance of the couple relationship to children's welfare, irrespective of whether the parents are together or separated.

And indeed have developed resources to reduce parental conflict

<https://www.eif.org.uk/resources>

Thinking systemically or ecologically

- Fathers and children must be viewed as part of complex social systems in which each person affects each other reciprocally, directly and indirectly (Lamb, 2010; Lamb and Lewis, 2010).
- The emphasis on viewing fathers as part of complex social systems, the importance of exploring relationships in terms of transitions, reciprocity and developmentally has been underscored by the ecological model of fathering developed by Carbrera et al (2018).

Men and child protection

1

Our knowledge base about the men who are involved with child protection services, their circumstances and backgrounds continues to be limited

2

A very recent paper tells us about fathers involved in recurrent proceedings

3

[“I Had No Hope, I Had No Help at All”: Insights from a First Study of Fathers and Recurrent Care Proceedings](https://www.bettercarenetwork.org/)
([bettercarenetwork.org](https://www.bettercarenetwork.org/))

'Recurrent' fathers

- Key background factors were being looked after as a child, experience of multiple childhood adversities, being unemployed, and not living with their youngest child.
- Domestic abuse was a significant concern
- Qualitative research with the fathers highlighted their desire for couples work and the problems caused by insistence on separation
- This research advocates the development of restorative and generative approaches

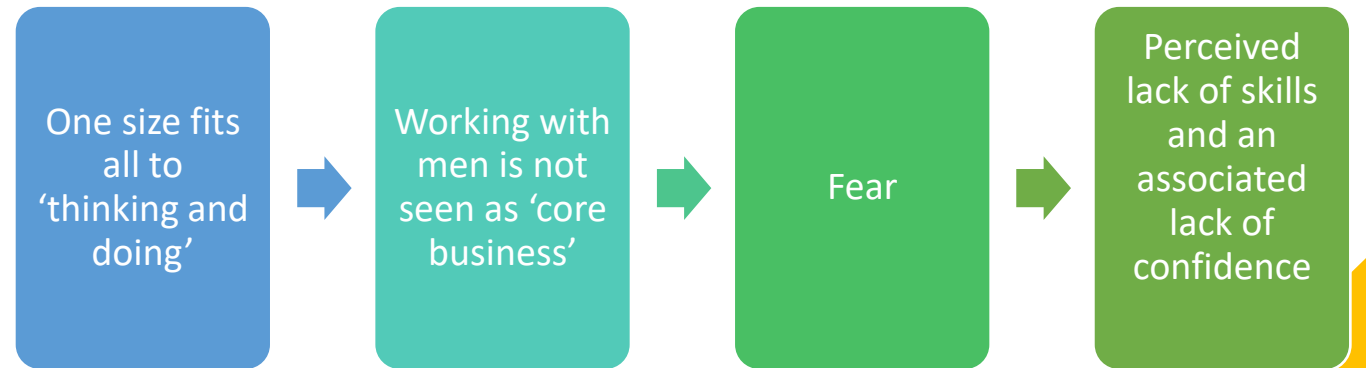
Some relevant practice issues

- Fathers, especially non-resident fathers, were often invisible – their names and contact details were absent from case files. As a result, they were often not invited to key meetings.
- > Workers felt constrained by time demands and unable to spend time seeking fathers out.
- > If mothers said they didn't want fathers involved, workers were unclear about the legal position. They also feared jeopardising their relationship with the mother.
- > Domestic abuse within families posed real concerns in terms of how safety for all could best be ensured.
- > Fear of violent men emerged as an obstacle to engagement on the part of women workers particularly.
- > Workers' own childhood experiences of abuse and violence could be an obstacle.

Engaging men/fathers

- As a result of action research projects and training, changes in practice were instigated in some local authorities:
 - > Case recording improved, and invitations to fathers and attendance at key meetings improved.
 - > Some fathers' and paternal networks were identified and utilised as safe living situations for children.
 - > Family Group Conferences were identified as a particularly helpful way of engaging fathers and their family networks.
 - > Workers' own fears were acknowledged and reflective cultures embedded in practice alongside on-going attention to risk and safety protocols.
 - > Exploring gender issues in practice became part of workplace discussions

Domestic abuse



Men as victims

- Nearly half of male victims fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse (only 51% tell anyone). They are nearly three times less likely to tell anyone than a female victim (49% of men tell no one as opposed to 19% women). This has worsened since 2015/16 where the figures were 61% for men (88% women).

ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018

Working with older men

- Extremely neglected area
- Some focus on gay older men
- Some focus on men as carers
- Limited research on men and social networks

- Is this because 'the world of old age has been assumed to be a world of women'?

Additional references

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- Featherstone, B (2018) *Frontline briefing on working with men in families*, Research in Practice
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