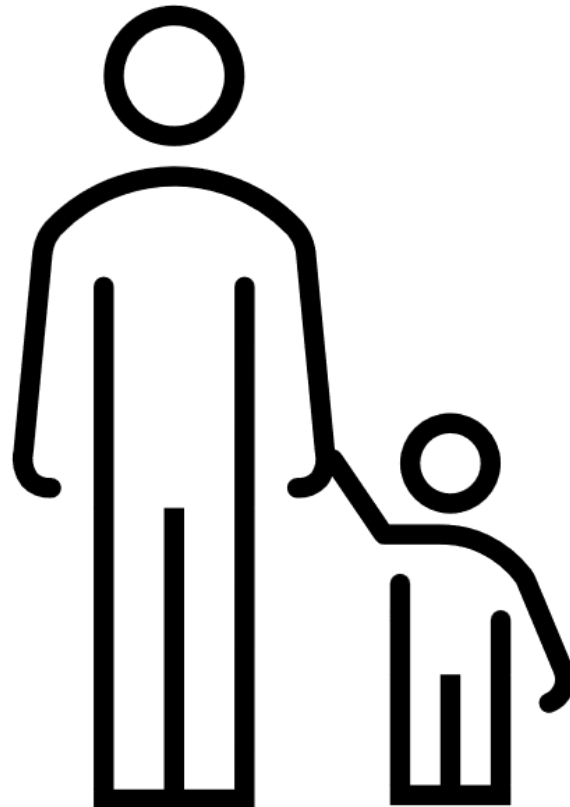


“Invisible” / “Hidden” / “Unseen” Men: Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice

Resource Pack



In 2021, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published their third national review entitled “‘The Myth of Invisible Men’: Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers’.

All services need to do more to involve and ‘see’ men. The NSPCC notes that “Men can play a vital role in their children’s development and wellbeing and have a major influence on the children they care for. However [...], fathers, male caregivers and male partners sometimes go ‘unseen’ by services involved with children.”

From universal to specialist services, national and local learning has told us that our knowledge of and engagement with men is often weak and ineffective. They are often missing from routine engagement with professionals, not always “visible” in recording, with detailed pictures of fathers/male caregivers missing from assessments. The same level of curiosity and enquiry should be applied to understanding men’s lives/experiences as it is to that of women.

This resource pack brings together national and local resources that look at this theme and consider how to engage with fathers and male carers.

It is also important to acknowledge that children are still at risk from other people, such as mothers, stepmothers and non-birth partners.

National Resources

[“‘The Myth of Invisible Men’: Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers’](#)

This report was published in September 2021 by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. They are an independent panel commissioning reviews of serious child safeguarding cases. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel works with the Department for Education.

[“Unseen men: learning from case reviews”](#)

[“Why language matters: ‘hidden’ in plain sight”](#)

The NSPCC works to ensure that learning from case reviews can be accessed and shared at a local, regional and national level. It provides “Learning from case review briefings”, which are a series of thematic briefings. Each briefing focuses on a different topic, pulling together key risk factors and practice recommendations. In September 2022, they published a briefing on unseen men. They also published a blog on ‘hidden in plain sight’ as part of their “Why Language Matters” series.

Local Resources for Practitioners

Practice Guidance

Within the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships' multi-agency procedures manual, there are [“Practice Principles for engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice”](#).

These give clear guidance for practitioners on how to work with and consider men in everyday practice as the excerpt below shows:

Some men may have had poor experiences of parenting and had limited engagement with universal service prior to becoming fathers.

- *Be curious about the man's role and how he can be supported to become a great dad.*
- *Involving fathers: services to promote early engagement with men due to become fathers and avoid delaying to when they become parents.*
- *Don't assume that all fathers understand the challenges of fatherhood/parenting and what it means to care for a child – and don't rely on key messages being passed on by mothers or female partners, for example ICON and safe sleeping advice.*
- *Aim to share information to help men explore and understand fatherhood/parenthood/caring responsibilities including the challenges.*
- *Help men to understand child development and the first 1001 critical days for all children by sharing information to help learning – don't assume that they have this information.*
- *Identify local support for men including any online resources, for example Dad Pad, [Home - ICON Cope](#), healthy together resources, Chat health, home start, Early Help, Centre for Fun and Families, Turning Point, [The Lullaby Trust - Safer sleep for babies](#), [Support for families](#)*

Videos

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships' YouTube Channel provides a bank of safeguarding videos that capture presentations from multi-agency training events and other resources that can be utilised by partners for learning and development – for example, in single agency training and supervision. It includes:

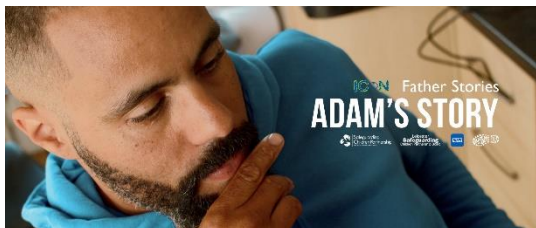


An hour-long training video on [“The Myth of Invisible Men: Working with Men”](#), delivered by the Safeguarding Learning Project Development Officer for the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

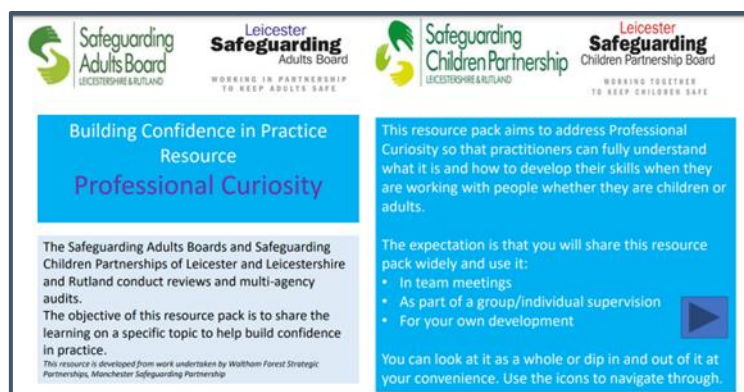
The ICON Fathers’ Stories, which are 6 short films that have been scripted by local fathers to reflect their experiences of managing crying babies. In 2020 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland agreed to implement ICON, as an evidenced based intervention to reduce the incidence of abusive head trauma (AHT) (formerly known as shaken baby syndrome) triggered by crying. Research evidence indicates that 70% of AHT is perpetrated by men and, therefore, it is of importance to ensure men are given the ICON message as well as the support and resources to help them manage a crying baby and reduce AHT. Full and shortened versions of the stories are available on the YouTube Channel here:

[LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships - YouTube](#)

Please click on the pictures below for the full stories:



Case Study – Professional Curiosity



The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards offer a set of [Building Confidence in Practice Resources](#). The aim is to focus on often complex issues that arise for practitioners when they are working with people, whether they are children or adults. They can be used in team meetings or as part of a group/individual supervision. The resource on [Professional Curiosity](#) includes a case study on “Oliver”, aged 6 months old, who is being dropped off at a childcare setting by an unknown male.

7-Minute Briefing



7-Minute Briefings are designed to convey key messages from national and local reviews and audits and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice. All individuals are encouraged to record or evidence how they have used 7-Minute Briefings. A [7-Minute Briefing Action Plan Template](#) is available to do this. A [7-Minute Briefing on “The Myth of Missing Men”](#) has been produced.

7 Minute Briefing

01 Report

The Child SAFEGUARDING Practice Review Panel published their 3rd national review in September 2021:

[“The Myth of Invisible Men”: safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers](#)

07 Reflections and Resources

How confident are you in working with men? What do you know about the histories of the men with whom you work? Do you routinely check in with dads as you do with mums? What do they think? How would you know?

[Unseen men: learning from case reviews | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Building Confidence in Practice Resource Packs](#)

[7 Minute ICON Briefing](#)

06 Key issues for Practice

All services need to do more to involve and ‘see’ men. Men who want to be involved are routinely excluded from services and the same structures enable those who present a risk to not be involved. As a system from universal to specialist services are knowledge of and engagement with men is often weak and ineffective.

The same level of curiosity and enquiry should be applied to understanding men’s lives/experiences as it is to that of women. These men were not invisible but were ‘unseen’.

Four Tier Model (for working with men)

- 1) **Understanding men’s lives and their histories** – exploring ideas of fatherhood, race, ethnicity, personal histories – how does this impact them now?
- 2) **Engaging and assessing men** – Developing parental strategies; understanding child developments, building an authentic engagement for a meaningful assessment
- 3) **Supporting best practice** – Role of supervision in sharing fears & anxieties about working with men; how to support the worker. Focus quality assurance systems
- 4) **Service design** – Culture and context; processes, tools, frameworks and services

02 Introduction

The review looks at the circumstances of babies under 1 who have been harmed or killed by their fathers or other males in a caring role. 35% of all serious incident reports to the National Panel involve serious harm to babies, the vast majority involving physical injury or death. This is the biggest category of all notifications that the Panel sees.

Of the 257 incidents reported since 2018 the panel considered that 92 were eligible for the review and 23 cases were considered in greater depth.

The views of professionals and perpetrators were sought during this review.

03 Key Data

At the time of the abuse: 81 were living with their birth father and only 11 with unrelated men.

- 45 (49%) were only known to universal services.
- 24 (26%) were known to early help.
- 12 (13%) were open to social care as children in need.
- 11 (12%) were subject to child protection plans.

ETHNICITY: this was identified as White British in 66 (72%) cases; Asian in 6 (7%) cases; Black and minority ethnic in 3 (3%) cases; mixed ethnic background in 3 (3%) cases; BUT in 14 (15%) cases the information was missing.

04 Risk Factors: There was no single risk factor that emerged, more a combination of factors which impacted on the ability to manage parenting issues like crying, sleeplessness, and illness.

Factors such as:

Adverse Childhood Experiences	Poor impulse control
Young parents/Care leavers	Violence in history
Poverty	Worklessness &/or Debt
Substance misuse, which could be chronic & normalised	Undiagnosed mental health problems
Racism	Low self-esteem

A focus on men with violent histories including domestic abuse is appropriate BUT there are perpetrators with no violent history who may be more difficult to identify.



05 Risk Factors

- 59 featured domestic abuse (either current or historical)
- 32 featured fathers with mental ill health
- 30 featured young parents
- 5 parents were care leavers

Men are more likely to injure babies than women.

Male babies are more likely to be injured than female babies.

Resources for Fathers

There are many resources available for parents that are suitable for both mothers and fathers.

There are some resources specifically aimed at fathers:

- [DadPad](#)
- [The Lullaby Trust – Dads Zone](#)