

# NHS Scotland Family Nurse Partnership National Conference Edinburgh 2023

Understanding and supporting the information needs of young  
fathers: action planning

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# Session Overview

1. Why focus attention on information needs?
2. Previous work with young mothers
3. Planned work with young fathers
4. Activity: action planning
5. Open discussion

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20  
25  
10 min



# Why focus attention on the information needs of young parents?

- The transition to parenthood is a period of profound change and psychosocial adjustment (Kamali *et al.*, 2018; Levin-Keini & Shlomo, 2019). It can transform how a person thinks of themselves and the world around them and generates new and wide-ranging needs for knowledge and understanding.
- Many new parents feel ill-prepared and ill-equipped for their new roles (e.g. Carolan, 2007; Jones et al, 2019). Information helps preparedness but unmet needs are reported, and correlated with negative health outcomes (e.g. Boyce et al., 2007; Gazmararian *et al.*, 2014; Rotich and Wolvaardt, 2017).
- Young parents are widely reported to be at increased risk of negative health outcomes, but their information needs are understudied.

For a communication [and education] program to be successful, it must be based on an understanding of the needs and perceptions of the intended audience.

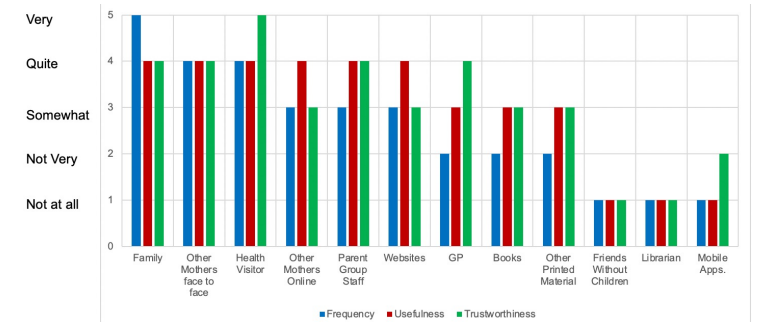
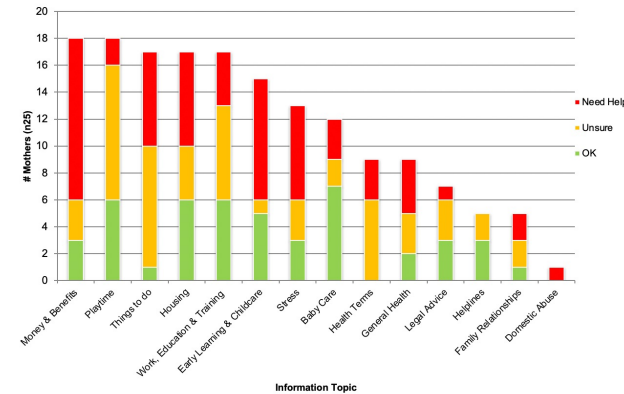
US Department of Health and Human Services (2004 p.11)

# Previous work with young mothers

- Three year ESRC funded project. Multiple state and third sector partners.
- Sought to inform future young mother health communication and education by identifying and better understanding:
  - the everyday information needs of young mothers, their information seeking behaviours, and the factors influencing behaviours
  - The factors influencing young mother engagement with state and third sector support services, and preferred interventions.
- Design: interdisciplinary, exploratory, qualitative, ethnographic.
- Main (mixed) methods: observation, survey, interviews, focus groups. Also included textual content analysis of young mother questions asked in online groups.
- Participants: 62 young mothers, 55 healthcare professionals.

# Previous work with young mothers

- Example data includes:
  - the information needs of young mothers and their ability to meet with or without support.
  - the information sources used by young mothers by frequency of use, usefulness, and trust.
  - the issues and barriers experienced by young mothers.



complexity  
 misinformation  
 fear  
 trust  
 literacy  
 self-efficacy  
 stigma  
 Institutional bureaucracy  
 identity  
 incognizance  
 Info access  
 info overload  
 unconscious bias

# Previous work with young mothers



## Key findings and recommendations:

1. The information needs of young mothers are highly complex, spanning topics of parenting, poverty and personal development; issues of cognitive load and affect.
  - *More holistic (and constructive) support needed within healthcare systems.*
2. Mothers value and benefit from interpersonal sources of information and demonstrative and participatory learning.
  - *The primary form of health communication should be interpersonal and interactive.*
3. Mother use of NHS digital health services is low.
  - *Issues of digital content and access need addressed to encourage mother use.*
4. An important information intermediary role is provided by support workers, but associated issues of dependency.
  - *Health literacy education needed to develop longer-term independence in young mothers.*

# Planned work with young fathers

- A WHO (2018) review of inequalities in men's healthcare has highlighted the "importance of recognizing gender-based barriers and designing gender-responsive health services and health promotion initiatives to effectively reach men" (2018, pviii), with fatherhood identified as an area for priority attention reiterated in recent policy briefing (WHO, 2022).
- A challenge hindering progress is our limited understanding of the paternal information needs of men and preferred and effective methods of information access and support, reported as relatively unexamined in relation to mothers (Cramer, 2018; Deslauriers & Kiselica, 2022).
  - Young fathers described as "neglected" (Donald et al., 2022, p.450).
- There are complex access and behavioural barriers to consider, the former influenced by healthcare policy and systems, the latter by sociocultural structures and norms.
- Such barriers place young fathers and their children at risk of living a stratified and disengaged existence within impoverished small information worlds and contributing to persistent gender divisions and structural inequalities (Lau & Hutchinson, 2020; Andreasson et al., 2022).

*Along the maternity pathway, opportunities to support the whole family are missed; and that this may not only compromise maternal and infant health outcomes, but may also compound the many social and personal obstacles that can disconnect men from their role as fathers.*

Fatherhood Institute (2018, p45)

# Planned work with young fathers: aims/questions

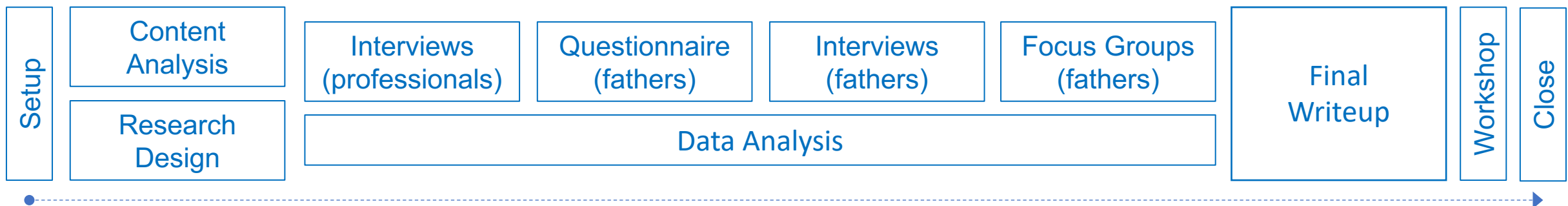
- Follow-on study now focused on fathers.
- Key research questions:
  1. what information and support services are offered to young fathers and in what ways?
  2. what are the information needs of young fathers and how do they manifest?
  3. what information services are used by young fathers, what are not used, and what factors influence use?
  4. what barriers to paternal information do young fathers experience and how are they responded to?
  5. what support interventions do young fathers consider important and appropriate?
- Application submitted for CSO funding with FNP Scotland as the key sponsor. Further initial partners: Fathers Network Scotland; Dads Rock, Dads Work.





# Planned work with young fathers: design

- Planned duration: Oct 2023 – Aug 2025
- Methods: survey, interviews, focus groups. Will also include content analysis of existing information and service provision for young fathers.
- Target participation: 30 professional interviews; 400 father questionnaire returns; 60 father interviews; 32 fathers in four focus groups.
- Father recruitment: primary recruitment via FNP client base and third sector partners. Further online recruitment via YoungScot, DAD.info, and BabyCentre etc.
- FNP input via: advisory group membership; national conferences; consultations with national leads and regional teams and regional ‘champions’; final workshop/conference.



# Planned work with young fathers: output

- This first major study will advance our understanding of:
  - the information needs of young fathers including how becoming a father affects a young man's concept of identity and understanding of needs (or not), and their motivations to access new sources of information and support.
  - the information seeking behaviours (or not) of young fathers, and influencing factors.
  - the role of support groups and wider social networks including factors of format, membership, and trust.
  - the degree to which existing healthcare systems and services meet the needs of young fathers, and any gaps or barriers.
  - the support preferences of young fathers.

*Our findings will guide both policy (**what** to provide) and practice (**how** to provide), including important collaborative aspects (**who** to provide).*

# Breakout Activity

- 25 mins.
- In groups, please discuss the following:
  1. With reference to the proposed research questions, is there anything further that you think we should be exploring?
  2. What challenges do you think we might face, and what could we do to overcome?
  3. What would be good outcomes from this work?
  4. Would you like to be involved in this work, and if so, in what way(s)?
- One member to take notes for reporting back (#1-3).
  - Separate sheet on tables for #4.



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