

Research supports importance of father figures in children's education

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(Medical Xpress)—Researchers from the University of Bath have worked with local schools and families to assess how important father figures are in their children's education and upbringing.

Dr Susan Milner from the Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies and Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan from the Department of Education, interviewed fathers and their children, as well as teachers and staff, from schools and early years settings across the Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) district as part of the Fathers' Friday initiative.

The scheme was a one-off event as part of a Bath & North East

Somerset council-led campaign celebrating and promoting fathers in children's lives. Its aim was to invite fathers, and other male role models, to spend a day with their children at their primary schools, nurseries, pre-schools and children's centres across the district to witness first-hand their children's experiences and take a more 'hands-on' approach to their education.

The role of fathers in a child's development has come to the forefront of research and policy in recent years. A father's role is seen as particularly important because of concerns of the difficulties faced by some fathers in sustaining relationships with their children, with almost 20 per cent of fathers reporting that they feel left out of their upbringing.



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The researchers conducted interviews with fathers, children and teaching staff and collected questionnaires that had been filled in by the participating families, as well as using video contributions from the children and their fathers.

They found that fathers, and other male family figures, and the children gave a positive assessment of the initiative, saw the beneficial outcomes

from it and expressed a desire for such activities to continue in the future. It also found that fathers who take part in events like Fathers' Friday are more likely to get involved in other educational support activities such as sports day, parents' evening, and extracurricular outings.

Dr Milner said: "There are many obstacles to paternal involvement, ranging from separation to employment responsibilities, as well as attitudes of professional educational staff and social workers who tend to see childcare as the mother's responsibility.

"This research therefore comes at a pivotal time where practitioners and government, alike, are seeking innovative methods to address the imbalance between paternal and maternal care."

Dr Chawla-Duggan added: "In the area of early years education there is a convincing body of evidence which shows a persistent positive correlation between paternal involvement from the early years and later childhood outcomes.

"Based on this study, our contention is that by involving [fathers](#) in activities which previously were seen to belong to the mother's domain, child care and educational settings have the capacity to support families in ways which can enhance child outcomes and this is an area of research that needs further exploration."

Sara Willis from Bath & North East Somerset Council's Early Years & Extended Services said: "This new research is an important resource for anyone considering developing similar initiatives. Not only does the report highlight the value of such initiatives, it also details the practical steps and lessons learned from such an exercise."

A short film about the initiative, a summary of our key findings, our full

report, practical tips and much more can be found here:

More information: [www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/ch ... celebrating-fatherhood](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/ch...celebrating-fatherhood)

Provided by University of Bath

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