

Working with fathers in Child Protection Conferences



The Independent Chairs Role



- Prepare parents, children, young people and their wider family for the Conference
- Support the multi-agency professionals in their preparation for the Conference
- Facilitate the Child Protection Conference
- Ensuring the Conference is a safe environment
- Support the sharing of all participants views - expertise should be distributed across the variety of attendees in order to fully understand the wider needs of the child
- Supporting decision making
- Supporting the development of the Child's Plan

The aim of Child Protection Conferences



- Collaborative process with parents, child, young person, family network and multi-agency group
- Agree ONE plan that focuses agencies on the risks of the child and involves family and multi-agency group
- Ownership and accountability
- Forward change process
- Outcomes driven for the child

Why is it important Fathers are involved?

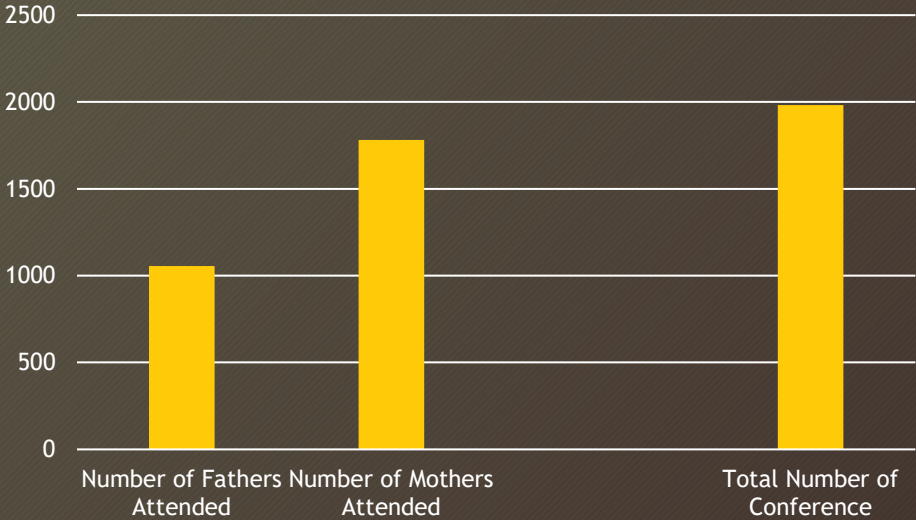


- Fathers, alike mother can bring both risk but also resource
- We have to hear the father's voice
- Listening carefully to fathers' narratives help understand the fuller picture
- Empathic listening with father's enables their positive engagement
- Involving everyone will achieve better outcomes for children

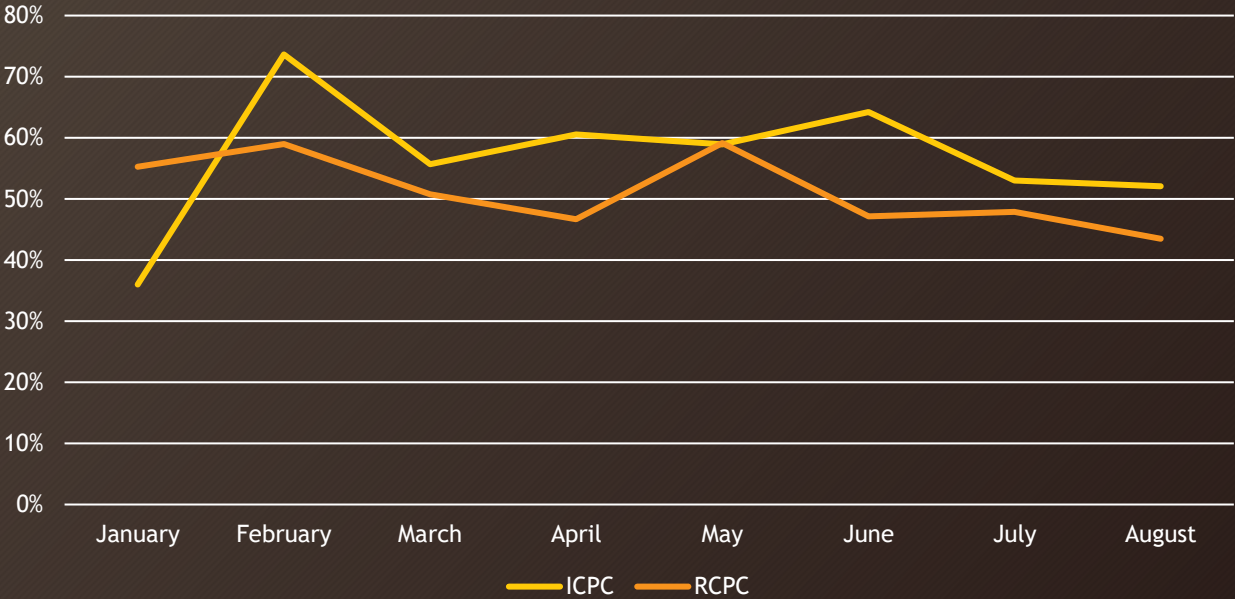
Fathers attendance at Child Protections Conferences



Number of Conferences (Initial and Review) attended by Fathers and Mothers by number in 2023



Percentage of Conference in 2023 where fathers attended each month



Barriers for professionals engaging fathers



- Solely relying on the mother or other family members to tell us about fathers
- Mother being the ‘gatekeeper’
- Parents are separated and/or do not live together
- Professionals only consider those they directly see in visits
- Focus is often on the main career only (often the mother)
- Limited time that practitioner has to explore fathers and their involvement
- Fathers unavailable for meetings as working
- Professionals find it difficult to find time in their working day to involve fathers
- Mother is often the ‘gatekeeper’ and without her being open and honest details are fathers are difficult to obtain
- Parental Responsibility

Barriers for Independent Chairs in engaging Fathers



- Fathers not being visible on the child's file (not named, or no evidence of attempts to ascertain his details)
- Contact details are often inaccurate
- Timings, especially of Initial conferences (sometimes due to the delay between Strategy Discussion and booking of the Conference)
- Fathers are often at work and difficult to contact
- Childcare needed when Conference is held (one parent needs to be with the children)
- It not being seen as a mans 'place'

How we are overcoming the barriers?



- Supporting and modelling good practice with our Social Work colleagues
- Building better relationships so Conferences are more family focused
- Breaking the myth of Parental Responsibility
- Better communication between the Independent Chair and fathers before the conference
- Being creative in how conferences are held
- Making conferences an open and welcoming space
- Conferences are restorative meetings
- Recognising communication needs

How you can help



- Break the myths about Parental Responsibility
- Relationship based practice with mothers
- Working with the family network to gain details of fathers
- Taking time within your practice to assess fathers fully
- Offer father's the same level of support and intervention as mothers