Father’s Involvement in Pregnancy and Early Years and its Impact on Children’s Development among Families Living in Luton’s most Disadvantaged Areas

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Objectives:

1: To explore the views of professional’s on fathers and their involvement
2: To explore the views and experiences of mother’s and father’s relating to father involvement and developmental outcomes
3: To explore how father involvement is influenced and how father involvement is associated with developmental outcomes

METHODOLOGY
Mixed methods sequential design:

Objective one:
Qualitative professional interviews

Objective two:
Qualitative parent interviews

Objective three:
Quantitative parent questionnaires

BACKGROUND
Father involvement and child development

Father involvement research consistently shows positive effects of father involvement on an array of developmental outcomes (Sarkadi et al., 2008, Frascarolo, 2004, Torres et al., 2014, Hall et al., 2014, Huerta et al., 2013).

Confounding factors

External influences and father characteristics have the potential to impact on father involvement, in turn affecting child development; age, ethnicity, working hours, occupation, educational level, SES, attitudes towards child caregiving and work and their relationship with the mother (Huerta et al., 2013, Perkins et al., 2013, Torres et al., 2014, Page et al., 2008, Towe-Goodman et al., 2014).

Professionals and their influence

‘Over the last decade there has been a national drive towards increased recognition of the father’s role and encouraging fathers’ involvement in health care in general, particularly in maternity services.’ - The Royal College of Midwives.

RATIONALE

• Lack of UK based research particularly in the area of disadvantaged fathers
• Lack of research exploring professional views and father involvement
• Study is in collaboration with Luton Flying Start. This research has the potential to inform future interventions and services within Luton by providing information on the current situation.

Luton: Significantly worse than the UK average for children achieving a good level of development by the age of five; children living in poverty and in care; childhood obesity; babies born with a low birth weight; breastfeeding rates; overcrowded households and unemployment (Atkins & Brunton-Reed 2014, Public Health England, 2016).

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