

“The father figures Project”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at

<http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	THE FATHER FIGURES PROJECT
Location	Sheffield, England, UK
Main theme	Young parenthood
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Young Fathers, Client Centred
Summary of programme/ practice	<p>The Father Figures Project was initially set up by Nacro (a charity working on crime reduction www.nacro.org) in April 2000 as a two year action research project in Sheffield, England, UK. The local context was one in which there was a legacy of provision that prioritised the primary carer (mainly women), scant recognition of the important influence men have, or can have, in children’s lives, and lack of familiarity with fathers and fatherhood work. In effect, work with fathers was largely uncharted territory. This rendered challenges but also opportunities that have seen the project evolve into a multidisciplinary, social, therapeutic, creative arts-based service that supports the needs of fathers and fills a gap in earlier provision.</p> <p>Concomitantly, shifts in cultural discourse and UK policy have drawn attention to the significance of fathers in children’s lives and the need for work specifically targeting fathers. Father Figures is now one of a number of agencies across the UK that have transformed approaches to working with fathers and has innovated to reflect best practice guidelines as spearheaded by the Fathers Direct organisation (Burgess and Bartlett, 2004). As well as</p>

	developing provision for fathers, Father Figures is credited with changing the local culture to one that is beginning to give greater recognition to work with fathers and widen the agenda so that parenting strategy is explicitly inclusive of fathers.
Target	The local context was one in which there was a legacy of provision that prioritised the primary carer (mainly women), scant recognition of the important influence men have, or can have, in children's lives, and lack of familiarity with fathers and fatherhood work. In effect, work with fathers was largely uncharted territory. This rendered challenges but also opportunities that have seen the project evolve into a multidisciplinary, social, therapeutic, creative arts-based service that supports the needs of fathers and fills a gap in earlier provision.
Objectives of programme/ practice	The project's main components are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the provision of a dedicated support service for fathers; ● networking with statutory and voluntary services to develop referral mechanisms and inter-agency working and promote deeper understanding of fathers and their needs; ● working with existing agencies and strategy groups to position Father Figures in mainstream policy and practice; ● and identifying sources of funding for the project.
Content of programme/ practice	The project, which currently depends solely on external funding, meets the needs of all kinds of fathers by offering a reflective, therapeutic, client centred and creative service. The project has been successful in offering an effective service to a wide spectrum of fathers including fathers of older children who offend; fathers of young people at risk, new fathers, young fathers, fathers from different cultural backgrounds, single, co-habiting, married and non-resident fathers.
Time scale	2000 to 2004
Programme/ practice design	<p>The project, which currently depends solely on external funding, meets the needs of all kinds of fathers by offering a reflective, therapeutic, client centred and creative service. The project has been successful in offering an effective service to a wide spectrum of fathers including fathers of older children who offend; fathers of young people at risk, new fathers, young fathers, fathers from different cultural backgrounds, single, co-habiting, married and non-resident fathers. The project currently has a working team of four staff.</p> <p>Key features are one to one emotional and practical support, counselling, weekly group work (3 groups), creative arts activities, advocacy, support for social services related issues and court proceedings, entitlements advice, sign-posting to other agencies and monthly family socials. The majority of work is undertaken with fathers. Some partners/mothers also participate on an ad hoc basis in counselling and one-to-one support visits. Where possible, fathers attend social activities with their children and partners.</p>
Resources involved (financial,	From April 2002 to March 2004 the 'Family Policy Unit' (formerly

human, others)	Home Office) and the Lloyds TSB Foundation funded Father Figures. During this period the Trust for the Study of Adolescence funded work with young fathers (under 25 years) and Sheffield First for Safety funded an evaluation of the project.
Evaluation	<p>Evaluation process:</p> <p>The evaluation drew on several data sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current and ex-client perspectives through observation of group work, analysis of film and creative writing and telephone interviews • group and individual interviews with The Father Figures Project team • interviews with a range of representatives from organisations and agencies who are involved with The Father Figures Project as members of the Advisory Group or as referring agencies • documentary evidence • analysis of baseline data with regard to levels of referral and engagement and meeting project targets • critical review of relevant literature and policy documents. <p>Results / impact of programme:</p> <p>The Father Figures Project is achieving its aims to provide a city wide support service for fathers and develop mechanisms for partnership, referral and liaison with key partner agencies. The support offered by Father Figures is instrumental in enhancing fathers' sense of self, self-esteem, communication skills and ultimately their role and identity as fathers. Fathers who were referred to Father Figures because of difficulties in their children's behaviour report improvements in abilities to work effectively with their children.</p> <p>Significant to this success is the unique model of provision developed, which is holistic, visionary, flexible, adaptable, responsive, therapeutic, needs-led and unusual in its creative, expressive arts-based-approach. The variety of types of provision offered is effective in meeting a plethora of needs. The partner agencies interviewed in the last evaluation believe that this unique model of provision is significant to its success (Hirst, 2004).</p>
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	<p>Burgess A and Bartlett D (2004) Working with Fathers: A Guide for Everyone Working with Fathers, www.fathersdirect.com</p> <p>Hirst, J. (2004) The Father Figures Project Evaluation. Sheffield Hallam University. Available at www.shu.ac.uk/research/ceir/downloads/father20figures20report.pdf [retrieved 11 January 2008]</p>