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Unlimited Potential in Salford and Rochdale

Dadly Does It – positive fatherhood

The health, well-being and life opportunities of children and young people in disadvantaged communities are much worse than of their peers in wealthier communities. The greatest underused asset in the lives of children and young people is fathers. Communities and child-related services and organisations tend to focus – and put most pressure – on mothers. Some largely ignore fathers.

Dadly Does It started in 2013, and has run in three different neighbourhoods in Salford and Rochdale. The fathers involved in Dadly Does It tended to have long-term histories of economic and social marginalisation. Many experienced various childhood traumas, with associated complex and difficult family relationships and poor educational experiences.

In each neighbourhood, Dadly Does It focussed on ‘what’s strong, not what’s wrong’, and drew on the strengths, assets and hidden wisdom of communities. It used a ‘positive deviance’ approach, following the four Ds: define the problem; determine the positive role models; discover what they do; design ways of sharing solutions. In each neighbourhood, dads came together and designed their own solutions, which included a Saturday Club for activities with children, and a cycling project.

From these activities, we learned that children want time to do things with their dads. The dads become increasingly motivated to change. As a result, children’s well-being improves, the pressure on mums reduces, and relationships in some families become more positive.

A social return on investment found that £1 yielded around £3 of savings in children’s services alone, and £13 of value for the fathers who were actively engaged.

Amongst other things, we have learned to relate to fathers as fathers (rather than as men). Positive role models are effective – if working ‘shoulder to shoulder’. If fathers find purpose, they regain control and well-being improves.

For further information contact:

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