

Case studies

A dad's perspective: Rashid's story

Five years ago, Rashid was running his own property business and bringing up his two teenage sons on his own. Though his sons were generally well behaved, they were reluctant to help their father with household chores, and Rashid started to find it a bit of a struggle juggling home, work and family life alone. "My social life became non-existent, which was just as well as I didn't have any energy," says Rashid. "My get up and go had got up and gone!"

Then Rashid met Shahan Miah, the organiser of a local service for fathers at the Luton On Track Education Centre, completely by chance through work. During their meeting, they started to talk about being a father and Shahan suggested Rashid join his fathers' group to meet new people and find new ways to bond with his children.

Rashid joined the group and started taking part in a range of activities aimed at fathers, including a healthy cooking course. The course taught dads how to prepare curries and other dishes using less fat, sugar and salt, as well as simple but effective techniques for encouraging their children to eat more healthily.

"We were encouraged to eat more fruit and vegetables, and were given health leaflets to read which I found very useful," said Rashid. "As a result I changed some of my eating habits and those of my sons." During the course, Rashid felt a camaraderie developing among the fathers attending, and he made several new friends.

Rashid also joined in with badminton classes for dads. "My eldest son also joined in on some of the badminton sessions, which he really enjoyed, and which helped me bond with him," says Rashid.

As well as recreational activities, Rashid attended a drugs awareness session. Though his sons had never had issues with substance abuse, Rashid found the lectures useful for improving his family relationships and preventing problems from arising in the future. "I was grateful that I didn't have that problem and realised I was very lucky. What I benefited from most was the probing questions asked during the sessions, like 'Do you know where your children are? How would you tackle this problem, or that problem?' That's when I realised I could improve my relationship with my children."

Three years ago, Rashid remarried, and the couple had two more children. Being married again with a young family means that Rashid doesn't have much spare time, but he still attends one-off sessions at the fathers' group when he can. "My experience with the fathers' group was really positive and changed some of my perspectives," he says. "It made me want to improve my family life."