

# Summary report 2022-23

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Here's a summary of key projects we worked on in the 2022-23 financial year. We will publish a full report about the year's activities, including our audited accounts, early in 2024.

## Contents

[Improving Safeguarding through Audited Father Engagement Training](#)

[Paternal Involvement and its Effects on Children's Education](#)

[Transition to Parenthood](#)

[Engaging Dads](#)

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# Improving Safeguarding through Audited Father Engagement

**ISAFE is an online learning package we developed with support from CASCADE, to improve engagement with fathers and father-figures, by local authority children's social work departments**

# ISAFE

Improving Safeguarding  
through Audited  
Father Engagement



*Thanks to funding from Foundations, we're delivering ISAFE to social workers in seven English local authorities as part of a randomised controlled trial, with Ipsos as independent evaluator.*

The aim of ISAFE is to address services' failure to routinely and systematically engage, assess, support and challenge men in families – which has been highlighted repeatedly over several decades, in inquiries into cases where children have died or been seriously injured. This issue was highlighted in our evidence reviews for the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2021) and [The Myth of Invisible Men](#), its influential report published later the same year.

Our approach is to address both individual social workers' practice, and the systems that surround them - helping children's social work departments better identify and work systematically with men in families, thus preventing harm to children, and increasing the chances of children staying in the care of family members, where this is safe.

The ISAFE package includes:

- Training for social workers, to help them engage effectively with men in families, and make use of 'motivational interviewing'

- Training for quality assurance staff, in how to monitor social workers' father-engagement routinely and systematically (using a father-inclusion audit tool)
- Training for team leaders to help them lead and support their colleagues to do the best possible job of engaging with fathers
- A webinar for senior leaders, to help them push through changes in policies and systems that will make father-engagement part of LAs' routine, everyday work

Between October 2022 and March 2023 we created the intervention, working closely with our partners and an expert advisory group. We developed training content for social workers, quality assurance staff and team leaders, including a password-protected website featuring evidence reviews, practice guides and videos and audio recordings co-created with fathers from [North East Young Dads and Lads](#) and [Future Men](#).

We also wrote an intervention protocol; agreed data sharing agreements and memoranda of understanding with the four LAs in Cohort A; organised both cohorts' training sessions, to take place in 2023-24; and provided support to Ipsos in their development and administration of pre- and post-intervention evaluation measures.

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## Training

**Through our services offer, we train +1,000 practitioners a year from across the nation**



In 2022 - 23, our reach spanned 16 local authorities across England and Wales, including practitioners from early years, health visiting, Family Hubs, maternity services, family support and early help, schools, and social workers.

The majority of our training is under long term contracts, involving a range of interventions.

A large part of our training delivery came under Reducing Parental

Conflict, followed by courses on safeguarding and bespoke consultancy services.

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## Paternal Involvement and its Effects on Children's Education

**We are co-investigators of the PIECE study, funded by the Economic & Social Research Council. The study undertook the first longitudinal analysis in England that explores the relationship between fathers' childcare involvement and their children's attainment at primary school.**



*The final report (co-authored by [Dr Helen Norman](#) and our Head of Impact & Communications, Dr Jeremy Davies) and resources for education settings and families are [available online](#)*

Part of our contribution to the study was the PIECE Talks: two online discussion events with parents and education practitioners which we ran in May 2022. These talks were designed to help build our understanding of how fathers support their children's learning, and the help fathers want and receive.

We held the PIECE talks online (using Zoom), and the information participants shared fed anonymously into the resources we went on to develop for education settings and families.

We already knew, from existing research, that parents' early childcare involvement is important for children's development – but much of this evidence was based on research conducted with mothers or parents more generally.

In the fathers' event, we spoke to fathers who had at least one child under the age of 12, and who were from a diversity of backgrounds

(including, but not limited to, biological/non-biological parents, those in two parent or single parent families, parents that live with their children full or part-time, or not at all).

We shared some key findings of a survey we had conducted earlier in the year, in which 250 fathers shared their experiences of supporting their children's learning and dealing with early years settings and primary schools.

Our discussions focused on how fathers approach supporting their children's learning, and ways schools, nurseries and other family services could engage most effectively with fathers – including those whose working hours make physical attendance in settings difficult, and those don't live with their children full-time.

In the education sector event, we spoke to professionals with a role in parental engagement, education leaders, and representatives from organisations and projects using technology to support parent-school relationships – to hear their ideas and perspectives.

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## Transition to Parenthood

**The three year T2P study, led by Middlesex University Business School – with the Fatherhood Institute as one of several co-investigators – kicked off in October 2022.**



The project, funded under the ESRC's Transforming Working Lives programme, aims to examine how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) manage their businesses and staffing when their employees become parents.

Evidence suggests SMEs lag behind in recognising the challenges parents face and implementing 'family-friendly' work options.

Our role on the project is to embed father-inclusion in the study's design and delivery. In the early stages of the project we helped draft interview schedules and topic guides that address key issues likely to face men becoming fathers while working for small employers. We've also contributed to participant recruitment – by including calls-to-participate in our newsletters and on social media.

## Engaging Dads

**We partnered with the Royal College of Midwives to publish a new toolkit for maternity professionals, to continue and accelerate progress towards deeper, more systematic, effective engagement with fathers and other non-birthing parents.**



# Engaging Dads

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During the summer of 2022 we ran a consultation event about engaging with diverse fathers in the perinatal period, as part of our collaboration with the Royal College of Midwives.

Guest speakers included Elliott Rae, founder of Music Football Fatherhood, Owen Thomas, fatherhood programme lead at Future Men, and Sandra Igwe, CEO of The Motherhood Group, who advocates for black maternal health.

We also produced a range of content for the toolkit, including evidence summaries, a father-inclusive perinatal pathway, practical tips for father-inclusive practice and a series of ten podcasts, featuring interviews with key voices on fathers' impact and experiences in the perinatal period – including anthropologist and fatherhood expert Dr Anna Machin, sociologists Dr Paul Hodkinson and Dr Ranjana Das, midwives Dr Debbie Garrod and Lisa Common, and Kieran Anders, operations manager at the Dad Matters project in Greater Manchester.

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