



## 1 Data as shown in 'Myth of Invisible Men' 2021

Men are more likely to be perpetrators of physical abuse and harm to babies than women

Birth fathers are much more likely to be the perpetrator than another male figure

Biological fathers are more likely to kill infants than stepfathers in ratios ranging from 5:1 to 26.1 in the first year of life in the UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand

Ratio of biological fathers to 'stepfathers' (including partners) where babies have been killed in England and Wales is 10:1. This increases to 15:1 when shaking is the cause of death

## 2 What is the story?

Research found that fathers are both absent and enabled to be absent across the range of service provision through child in need, child protection and children in care services

There is insufficient evidence that this absence is being routinely tackled within the system

Too often, when men are engaged, they are seen in a simplistic binary way, good or bad, supportive or a risk

Data shows that men are more likely to be perpetrators of physical abuse and harm to babies than women

Data indicates that birth fathers are much more likely to be the perpetrator than other male figure

**Learning point:** "The Myth of Invisible Men" Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers ["The Myth of Invisible Men" 2021](#)

## 3 How does this present?

In 81 of the 92 cases children were living with their birth father at the point of the abuse and only 11 with unrelated men:

45 (49%) were known only to universal services at the time of the abuse.

24 (26%) were known to early help

12 (13%) were open to social care as children in need

11 (12%) were subject to child protection plans

## 4 Points to consider- Children's Services

Engagement with fathers in family services should be routine from MASH, assessment teams to child protection teams

Fathers are invited to child protection conferences only 55% of the time; known violent fathers are not contacted by social workers prior to meetings 38% of the time

## 7 Points to consider- Schools

How are fathers encouraged to attend parental meetings?

Be inquisitive about who collects the child from school- try to understand their story.

Are fathers offered the opportunity to receive parent updates and do you have their details on your system?

Are fathers given the opportunity to engage with school separate to the mother?

## 6 Points to consider- Police

How do you engage with the professional network when enquiring about fathers and their role within the family?

Enquiries into the father's presence, living arrangements and caring responsibilities should be considered routinely

## 5 Points to consider- Health

Fieldwork identified that many health professionals never explored with the mothers who the prospective father was

Antenatal services are insufficiently flexible they are rarely provided out of hours or at weekends and not offered in a way intending to maximise fathers' participation and involvement

In 2015, Humphries and Nolan found that '*...there is little evidence that the importance of engaging fathers is reflected in health visitor training or that primary care services are wholly embracing father-inclusive practice*'

