

Supporting men in early parenting is a key national strategy in promoting infant mental health

Presentation to

Australian Marce Society for Perinatal Mental Health
2019 Conference

Associate Professor Richard Fletcher The University of Newcastle
Dr Jacqui Macdonald Deakin University
Professor Louise Newman The University of Melbourne

Paternal perinatal depression matters

Depressed dads negative effects

- Do less reading to infants
- Spank infants more
- Withdraw from interaction
- More irritable

Leads child behaviour problems
Contributes Mothers' depression
Costs a fortune



- So of course we need screening and treatment

Screening dads will happen

- NHS England 2018
- WA Perinatal and infant mental health 2018
- NSW Health 2020
- National? 2021

But screening is just one part!

Paternal perinatal positives

- What we need is involved, engaged, confident, committed dads who
 - Take time off work
 - Offer support to mother
 - Care for their baby
 - Share the load
 - Get help when needed



How do we help men to become these fathers?

A culture shift is already here



A culture shift is already here



However

- “When we talk to dads, we hear just how hard it is for them to reach out for help. They tell us they really want to be there to support their new family, and they are embarrassed that they might need help when their partner has done the hard yards of pregnancy and labour”.

Terri Smith, PANDA CEO

A culture shift in services

“Men’s commitment to parenting is considerably moderated by external factors such as attitudes and support from partners, family, work and community services”

WA Father inclusive practice guide

We need professionals who think about, value and communicate with fathers

A culture shift everywhere

- Your workplace
- What you say and do
- What society & media say to him
- Policies in organisations
- National and state policies

APLEN steering group

Emma Walsh CEO **Parents at Work**

Catherine McNair Head of Diversity & Inclusion, **QBE**

Kylie Fuller Head of Diversity and Inclusion, **Telstra**

Eric Mercier Management Consultant, **KPMG**

Gina De George Director of Inclusion, Diversity and Wellbeing, **Deloitte**

Ryan Burke Executive Manager, Group Diversity & Inclusion, **Commonwealth Bank**

Amelia Britton Head of Diversity and Inclusion, **Norton Rose Fulbright**

Jessie Pitts Diversity & Inclusion Manager, **PwC**

Your workplace: what would a poster say to tell dads that you value them?

- Words
- Words
- Words
- Words

Picture of dad and
baby?

One piece of support sms4dads



One piece of support sms4dads



What makes SMS4dads effective?

- Texts synched to needs
 - Normalisation
 - Prompts to interact
 - Safety net – Mood Tracker
-
- Your involvement designing messages

Dads Group Inc



What makes Dads Group Inc effective?

- Local leaders
 - Support via national network
 - Normalisation
 - Prompts via social media
 - Agenda is to 'hang out'
-
- Your involvement facilitating support

Steps for you to take

- Join the SMS4dads reference group and tell your clients
- Find the local Dads Group contact and tell your clients
- Subscribe to the free Fatherhood Research Bulletin
- Join the Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium
- Come along or send someone to the Aboriginal Fathers Symposium in Newcastle November 8th

November 8th 2019
The University of Newcastle



CHANGING THE STORY

Young Aboriginal Men's Mental
Health, Wellbeing and Fatherhood

PHOTO: Edward Foote, Filming for sms4ATSIsads, Kirinari Aboriginal Hostel

November 8th 2019
The University of Newcastle



CHANGING THE STORY

Young Aboriginal Men's Mental
Health, Wellbeing and Fatherhood

PHOTO: Edward Foote, Filming for sms4dads.com, Kirinari Aboriginal Hostel

Details

- Supporting men in early parenting is a key national strategy in promoting infant mental health Richard Fletcher, Jacqui Macdonald Louise Newman Contact richard.fletcher@Newcastle.edu.au
- Read: Men get postnatal depression too <https://bit.ly/2zMxPx9>
- *Dads Group Inc* Contact Thomas Docking tom@dadsgroup.org
- Subscribe to free *Fatherhood Research Bulletin* email family@Newcastle.edu.au
- Join *Australian fatherhood Research Consortium* <http://mappresearch.org/fatherhood-consortium>
- To join the *SMS4dads reference group* email richard.fletcher@Newcastle.edu.au
- To attend *Change the Story Young Aboriginal Men Wellbeing and Fatherhood* email family@Newcastle.edu.au