



Learning & Development

7-Minute Briefing

The Myth of Invisible Men

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safeguardingpartnership.org.uk

Children's
Safeguarding Assurance
Partnership

Blackburn with Darwen - Blackpool - Lancashire

01 Background:

'The Myth of Invisible Men' is the 3rd National Review commissioned by the **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel**, focussing on the circumstances of babies under 1 year old who have been harmed or killed by their fathers or other males in a caring role.

In the **majority of cases** where babies have been injured or killed, men are the perpetrators – research suggests that men are between 2 and 15 times more likely than women to cause this type of harm in under 1s.

The Review found the following key themes within the men

02 Why It Matters:

who had committed these extreme acts of violence:

- History of adverse childhood experiences within their own childhoods (**ACEs**)
- **Substance misuse**; Practitioners need to explore this in-depth with families to better understand how possible risks to babies can be mitigated and addressed
- Problems with **anger and frustration**
- 64% of the 92 eligible cases considered in this review had evidence of either current or historical **domestic abuse**
- In the review's fieldwork, many of the men were found to have had some degree of **mental ill health**

03 Information:

In working with men, factors included should consider:

- Fathers are too often '**excluded**' from child protection assessments and work with families
- Men are often only '**partially seen**'/shallow assessments
- Failures to seek information proactively
- Father's / men's roles in families **often not understood**

"You are the first person who has ever wanted to know what actually happened, what I went through. No one has ever asked me before....no one has ever bothered with me – you are the first person that has ever sat down and asked me my story" (The Myth of Invisible Men, CSPPR, September 2021)

Practitioners therefore need greater confidence and competence in acknowledging and exploring how **ethnicity, race, and racism** affect parenting. Equally, there is a need to understand every individual within the context of their own **histories, backgrounds and culture**.

04 What to Do:

Key recommendations and implications for ongoing practice development include the following priorities:

- Engaging and assessing men
- Developing parental strategies; understanding child development
- Building an authentic working relationship
- Understanding men's lives and their experiences
- Exploring ideas of fatherhood, race, ethnicity, personal histories

05 Questions to Ask:

- What does this mean for your practice?
- What can you do differently to ensure participation of males within your work with children and families?

Further recommended reading:

- [The Myth of Invisible Men](#) (CSPPR, Sept 2021)
- [The Best Start for Life: a vision for first 1001 Critical Days](#) (The Leadsom Review, March 2021)
- [The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) (legislation.gov.uk)

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