AIMS For a better birth...

Why Fatherhood Solutions Matters - the first year

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By Scott Mair, Founder and Director of Fatherhood Solutions

Twelve months ago, we set out to make a bold, loud case for dads. Not as extras in the parenting journey, not as just "helpers" to mums, but as central, active parents with their own needs, strengths, and challenges.

Reflecting on the last year, I am proud to say we have made considerable progress, however there is still much more to do.

Why Fatherhood Solutions Exists

Too often, dads are left out of the conversation whether it is in antenatal care, birth trauma recovery, feeding, bonding, mental health, or early years education. When dads are ignored, children and families miss out with dads left navigating some of the hardest transitions of their lives in silence.

We help services become father-inclusive from the inside out, undertaking system audits, developing action plans and pathways, delivering training and workshops, facilitating support groups and embedding lived experience.

We work alongside health visitors, midwives, family hub teams, charities, universities, and local

authorities, always asking the same question: *Where are the dads in this?*

We are working hard finding ways to include fathers, not just in areas where our "Step into Fatherhood" model is thriving, but across the country.

What We Have Done This Year

Here is a snapshot of what Fatherhood Solutions has delivered over the past 12 months.

Expanding local authority Dad Support Offer

We have continued our work with local authorities through the *Start for Life* programme, embedding support for dads into every stage of the first 1,001 days from pregnancy through to toddlerhood.

This has included:

Dad-only Baby Massage classes taught *by dads, for dads*, offering not only bonding time but practical knowledge on infant cues, touch, and regulation.

Weaning Workshops designed with dads in mind hands-on, no-fuss sessions helping build skills and confidence around feeding.

Pregnancy After Loss Support Groups run online in collaboration with charities, ensuring dads who have experienced loss are seen, supported, and never left out of the healing journey.

Storytelling sessions highlighting the importance of not just reading but storytelling in a way all dads are comfortable with.

Stay and play with dad a variety of activities designed to improve parenting confidence and socialising

Supporting dads with neurodiverse children or neurodiversity.

Military Dads A programme supporting deployed dads.

Frontline Fathers Monthly support and webinars for fathers on the frontline.

Walking the Walk Connection is powerful and sometimes it starts with something as simple as a walk. Our monthly Dad Walks have brought together hundreds of dads and their children. These are not just strolls; they are spaces where dads talk openly about parenting, mental health, and everything in between, surrounded by other men who just *get it*.

Five-a-Side Football We also launched our first Dads' Five-a-Side Football sessions. No pressure, no egos, just dads showing up, moving their bodies, and boosting their mental health in a space that is welcoming, fun, and judgement-free.

Birth Trauma Support

Too often, birth trauma is only associated with mums, however dads experience it too. Whether they witnessed a traumatic birth, felt powerless during a medical emergency, or felt sidelined in the process, it *stays with them.*

This is why we have built a strong partnership with the **Birth Trauma Association**, running **Bimonthly Zoom support sessions for dads**, offering a safe, supportive environment to talk, reflect, and heal. This work was highlighted at the *Make Birth Better Summit* and *Theo Clarke MP's book launch*, where we proudly stood up for the inclusion of fathers in trauma-informed care.

Young Dads, Neurodivergent Dads, and Dads with Lived Experience

We have been intentional about reaching the dads who are *least likely* to be reached. Our **young dads' sessions** have included practical cooking workshops for weaning and 121 mentoring.

We have supported **neurodivergent dads** with tailored sessions, plain language resources, and sensory-aware environments that make it easier to engage.

We have also worked with dads **recently released from prison, those living in temporary housing, and those from the most deprived postcodes** (SIMD 1 & 2, and the IMD),[1] helping them reconnect with their children and build back trust with professionals.

When services meet dads where they are, everything changes. We have seen it firsthand: dads building confidence, bonding with their babies, and actively engaging in services they used to avoid.

"*I never thought I'd be this involved — I didn't think it was for me. But these sessions have changed how I see myself as a dad.*" – Dad

Training the Workforce – Father-Inclusive Practice at the Heart

At the core of everything we do is workforce development. This year we have delivered training to a wide variety of health and social professionals including:

- Family hub teams.
- Midwifery and health visiting professionals.
- Speech and language therapists.
- Social service teams.

- University students (including midwifery, social work, and early years).

Our **Father-Inclusive Practice workshops** are built on real-life stories, evidence-based strategies, and a clear framework for change. We are not just ticking boxes, we are shifting cultures. From explaining how to spot signs of paternal mental health struggles to rethinking appointment access for working dads, we are helping services walk the talk when it comes to inclusion.

National Advocacy and Influencing Policy

Fatherhood Solutions has been working behind the scenes attending national roundtable talks, contributing to research, and amplifying dads' voices in places they have been missing for too long.

Highlights include:

- Attending the *Make Birth Better Summit* and receiving the **Impactful Organisation Award** for our commitment to supporting fathers during the perinatal period.

- Partnering with **Action Menopause Warwickshire** and **Healthwatch** to conduct focus groups with men on how to better support their partners through menopause.

- Contributing to discussions with the *Men and Boys Coalition*, *1001 Critical Days Foundation*, and other key bodies focused on improving early years outcomes.

We believe change happens both at the grassroots and at the top and we are proud to be doing both.

The Impact – Why It Matters

All this is not about just delivering events, it's about changing lives.

It is the neurodivergent dad who finally felt confident enough to take his baby out solo.

It is the grieving dad who joined our online session and said, *"This is the first time I've said it out loud."*

It's the young dad who cooked his baby's first solid meal and sent us a photo with a beaming smile.

It's the professional who told us, *"Your training made me rethink how I speak to dads – and it's already made a difference."*

This is what father-inclusive support looks like: practical, honest, tailored, and built on trust.

Looking Ahead – What's Next?

We are just getting started. In the next year, we are looking to:

- **Expand our "Step into Fatherhood" model** into more places across the UK.
- **Offer workplace consultancy** so employers better understand and support working dads, especially in the military, blue light services, and male-dominated industries.
- **Grow our lived experience team** and create more spaces where dads can lead the conversation.

Final Word

Fatherhood Solutions exists because we know that *when dads are supported, everyone benefits*. Stronger families, better outcomes for babies and healthier communities.

We are proud of what we have built this year, but we are even more excited about what is ahead. To every dad who's walked with us, shared their story, or taken that first step toward being the dad they want to be - thank you. We see you, we hear you, and we are here for you.

And to every service, local authority or employer wondering how to better support the dads in your world - let us talk.

Quote from a Dad of twins who engages with the step into fatherhood programme.

> "I wholeheartedly recommend Scott and the Fatherhood Solutions Group to any father navigating the early years of parenthood. Whether you're looking for advice, support, or simply a space to connect with like-minded individuals, this group is an invaluable resource that will undoubtedly enrich your journey as a father."

Quote from a Mum, whose husband is supported by Fatherhood Solutions

> "My husband engages with other support groups for dads and finds comfort in listening, supporting, and encouraging other dads. This is all down to Fatherhood Solutions, which I thank for your service. Not only for my husband, but for myself as he has offered me support and guidance. Thank you for being a network we can rely on at anytime, no question is too much for Scott."

Fatherhood matters - it is time we treated it that way.

Author Bio: Scott Mair is a father who understands the complexities and rewards of fatherhood. He is passionate about promoting mental health for fathers and providing them with the tools they need to

embrace their roles with love and understanding. It is his hope that this article will shed light on the importance of supporting fathers and celebrating the unique journey of fatherhood. Scott is proud to share this short film, produced by Coventry City Council, showcasing the work he has been doing to support dads across the City.

Fathers Matter – YouTube

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1 Editor's note: SIMD stands for the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Scott also works with dads from the most deprived areas of England too. IMD.