

Giving dad a helping hand...



www.luton.gov.uk/cfis



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Step towards fatherhood

Learning that you are about to become a parent is one of the most important experiences a man will ever have. There are a lot of big adjustments to be made and all dads will wonder the same things:

- am I ready for fatherhood?
- will I be a good dad?
- how will I cope with the pressure?
- what will change in my life?
- how can I be the best dad?
- how can I best support my child financially?



This booklet will help you embark upon the most rewarding and exciting phase of your life, put your anxieties to rest and deal with some of the key issues you might be facing.

Children need their mum and their dad. Fathers, like mothers, play a substantial and important role in a child's development and growth. There is much more to a father's role than the stereotype of being the 'income provider', though that is still important. Times have changed, and fathers, more than ever, must be involved parents. You have a special

place in your child's life. Fathers must contribute to their children's wellbeing. Fathers Plus research shows that children who have a positive male role model:

- grow up to be more **confident and secure**
- are **more sociable** and make friends more easily
- will **behave better** in their teenage years
- **perform well** at school and achieve more

- have **better career achievements**
- **build better relationships**
- **are less likely to get** involved in **criminal behaviour** or **substance misuse**
- are much **better at understanding and are more sensitive** to others
- are more likely to **contribute to society**.

Children aren't looking for perfect dads, but they do want to know that their dad is doing his best to give them a good start in life.

The birth

For more information on what happens while your partner is giving birth and information on getting your home ready for baby please visit:

www.babyandpregnancy.co.uk

Register your new baby

Your new baby has arrived, and you and your partner have named him or her. Now you must visit your local

hospital or registry office to register the birth within 42 days.

If you are the biological father of the child and were married to the mother at the time of the baby's birth, either of you can register the birth.

If you and the mother of your child are not married, only the mother can register the birth. However, the father's details can be entered if both parents attend and register the birth together.

To find the nearest office, please contact Luton Children and Families Information Service on **01582 54 88 88**.

Essential tips for fathers...

Fatherhood is a unique experience and your new baby will change your life. Learning how to best help and support your child, and your partner, will be challenging, but don't worry your fatherly instincts will kick in sooner than you think.

Here are some tips which may help along the way.

Change your priorities -

New babies take up a lot of time! That means less time for you to do the things you did before having a child. Your routine will have to change and you will have to consciously plan and devote time to making your baby the new priority. Help around the house and with the baby feed him or her, change nappies, give your baby a bath. Expect to get a lot less sleep at night, as your baby will wake up during the night at first. You and your partner will cope better with your new arrival if you work together.

Changing relationships -

Pregnancy is a time of preparation. Not only do you get the chance to prepare for a baby in the house and in your life, you must also prepare your relationship with your partner for a big change. Work on your relationship with the mother of your child to ensure that your baby has two parents who can support each other and work together in your child's best interests. Be supportive and understanding of your partner as new mothers go through a lot of hormonal changes after pregnancy. Support her and let her know you are committed to her and your child.

Equal partners -

You and your partner share a life and that means sharing tasks around the house from washing dishes to playing doll house. You may not love changing nappies, but taking an equal share in looking after your baby will make for a happier home.

Finances -

Moving from a dual family income to a single one can have serious consequences for your budget. Talk to your partner about your families financial situation. There are numerous unexpected costs in the first few months after a baby is born and saving beforehand can offset these. By planning ahead, you can make adjustments and head off the financial stress. Remember to use financial self-discipline, it'll be worth it long term.



Bonding -

Bonding with your child is important, right from the beginning. You can show fatherly love and affection towards your baby in numerous ways such as by cuddling, feeding, bathing, burping and dressing them. You will always be their daddy, so make sure you show them how important they are to you.

Be patient -

Parenthood isn't easy and sometimes a child will find a thousand ways to test your patience. Remember you are the adult and in charge, and think about what childhood was like for you. Your

child is learning all the time, and your job is to help and support them while they grow. Ask any father what the most important thing a new dad needs – chances are he'll answer patience!

Young fathers

Fathers play an important role. This is just as true of young fathers. Our research shows that many young fathers want to be and are involved with their children and are concerned about their child's future.



The focus of teen pregnancy tends to be on the mother, but young dads need support and encouragement too.

It doesn't matter if you are young, what matters is that you face up to your paternal responsibilities. Take equal responsibility for the child with your partner and try and get involved in bringing up your child right from the start. There are numerous ways in which you can show you care and that you want to be involved in your child's life. Attend hospital appointments before the birth and try and support your baby's mother – she likely shares many of the same fears and concerns you do.

Many young fathers initially find the transition into fatherhood confusing, and some struggle to understand what their partner is going through during and after the pregnancy. Try and seek help and advice from professionals, ask questions and prepare yourself for fatherhood by learning practical parenting skills, rather than just standing in the background as a silent observer.

Always remember that it is your action, not your age, which counts in the end. Young fathers are good fathers too.

Useful contacts

Young Father Initiative

Information for new dads:

www.young-fathers.org.uk

Childline

Free helpline for children and young people in danger.

Offers confidential telephone counselling service

Helpline no: 0800 11 11

www.childline.org.uk

Fatherhood Institute

Information available exclusively for dads. Features a brilliant section specifically aimed at young dads, including the 'Young Fathers - Guide to Paternity leave'.

Telephone no: 0845 634 1328

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

Care to learn

Provides an allowance towards childcare and travel costs for young parents (20 and under) in education or returning to education.

Telephone no: 0845 600 2809

www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn

Youngdads.co.uk

This website helps young dads to access information, everything they wanted to know about pregnancy, birth and beyond - but were afraid to ask!

www.youngdads.co.uk

Connexions

Connexions Direct is part of Connexions - providing high quality information, advice and support for young people. Get in touch with Connexions Direct advisers by phone from 8am to 2am.

Telephone no: 080 80013219

www.connexions-direct.com

Absent fathers

If you feel that you don't spend much time with your children then you are not alone.

There are many reasons a father may not live with their child. Separation and divorce are the main reason many fathers do not get the chance to interact with their children on a daily basis. Other reasons include a father travelling regularly for business or being absent from home more than they are present, or because he is in prison. There are lots of ways to reconnect with your children. For instance -

Communicate –

The most valuable gift you can give your child is to listen to the little and big things in their life. Listening to them is as important as talking. Children have many reasons for wanting you to sit down and listen to them. Sometimes they are looking for sympathy, sometimes attention. It might be they want to share an important moment with you and sometimes they need help. If you can't be there in person, make a phone call. If you can't call, write a letter or email to be read to them. Show them you care and want to make the effort.



Being there –

Being there for your child is the simplest thing in the world - read them a story, go to their school play, take them to the local park or museum. Just spending time doing simple things will mean the world to them. It's never too late to get involved in your child's life.

Show your affection –

All children need to know they

are loved, by both their mother and father. If you want to build a stronger relationship with your children, show them affection and let them know you care. Physical contact – hugs, cuddles as well as loving and reassuring words build confidence and trust in your child. Long term, this will instil security, hope, happiness, self-confidence, self-respect, assurance and comfort in your children's lives.

Separated fathers

Circumstances between parents vary, but a father's responsibility towards his children does not. Fathers have a vital role to play and should strive to be positive role models. Separated fathers need to make sure that, though they are no longer living under the same roof as their children, their child still feels loved and valued. The absence of a father can have a profound impact on the life of a child and can negatively affect them for the rest of their lives. If a child feels abandoned or neglected, it will become hard for them to believe any other men could be different.

Being a father to a child means so much more than just paying money towards them every now and then. There is legislation in place to make sure that separated fathers provide regular financial support but no laws can force a parent to be involved in his child's life or moral upbringing. Many organisations provide relevant information for separated fathers who want to genuinely support their children financially but also engage physically and emotionally with them.



Useful contacts

Couple Connection

Is an innovative new service from One Plus One, the UK's leading relationship research organisation. The site has been designed to help couples work through changes in their relationship.

www.thecoupleconnection.net

Dad Cando

Is intended to be a resource for all dads with a special emphasis on helping the single and or non-resident fathers who have contact with their children.

www.dadcando.com

Family court advice

Family court advice promotes fathers rights and helps fathers regain contact with their children at a fraction of solicitor's costs. Children & Family Advice Service can also be contacted: Telephone no: 01697 32 26 28
Mobile no: 07900 883 694

www.cf-as.co.uk

Families needs fathers

'Families Need Fathers' is a registered UK charity, which provides information and support to parents, including unmarried parents, of either sex. FNF is chiefly concerned with the problems

of maintaining a child's relationship with both parents during and after family breakdown'.

Telephone no: 020 7613 5060

Helpline no: 0300 0300 363

www.fnf.org.uk/home

Association of Shared Parenting

The Association of Shared Parenting exists to promote the right of children to the nurture of both parents after separation or divorce and to encourage and support parents in the fulfilment of that right. You can also contact them:

Telephone: 0116 254 8453

www.sharedparenting.org.uk

Gingerbread

Gingerbread offers lone parents and their children practical and emotional support, including benefits, education and housing.

Free phone advice line:

0800 018 4318

www.gingerbread.org.uk

Separated Dads

A complete guide to dealing with life as a separated father.

www.separateddads.co.uk

Child maintenance

Child maintenance is money paid towards your child's care. You are expected to pay it regularly, if you are living separate from the child and the other parent. This payment is paid directly to the parent who has the main day-to-day care of the child. Child maintenance is arranged either through agreement with the child's mother or through the Child Support Agency. The amount you pay towards the Child maintenance is based on your income and also if you are responsible for children in your own household.

For calculating the amount of child maintenance you might pay to financially support your child's mother, please visit

www.cmoptions.org.

Do fathers get paid leave too?

Paternity leave and pay are part of the package of rights and benefits designed to give support to working fathers and their partners. If your partner is expecting a baby, you will be entitled to paternity leave for up to two weeks immediately after the baby is born.

In order for you to be eligible for paternity leave, you need to be:

1) At least one of the following:

- child's father
- married to the mother of the child
- mother's civil partner
- mother's partner.

2) expected to have responsibility for bringing up the child and are taking leave to take care of the child and support the mother, and intend to take full involvement in the child's upbringing.

3) you must be an employee with a contract of employment with the same employer without a break and have been employed for 26 weeks (6 months) by the 15th week of the pregnancy. You need to inform your employer 15 weeks prior to your intention of taking paternity leave and the date you wish it to start.

If you qualify for paternity leave/pay, you can take either one or two week's paternity leave. Please note that the leave has to be consecutive and must be taken in one block.

For more information, please visit:

www.direct.gov.uk

Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP)

If your average weekly earnings are £90 or more (before tax), Statutory Paternity Pay is paid for one or two consecutive weeks at £123.06 or 90 per cent of your average weekly earnings if this is less.

Please bear in mind that SPP is treated as a normal pay, so tax and National Insurance will be deducted as usual.

Flexible working - If you are the parent of the child under 6, or under 18 if your child is disabled, you have the right to ask your employer to work flexible hours. Flexible working can include working part time, working school hours, home working, job sharing, flexi time working, time off in lieu, staggered working hours, self rostering (choosing your own working hours), shift working/shift swapping and voluntary reduced working time.

There are various reasons for dads to change their working pattern - for childcare, financial reasons, to help their partner or simply to improve the quality of their family life. One of the other benefits for men working flexibly after the birth of a child is that it can often allow their partners to work as well, and equally balance the

responsibility of childcare.

For detailed information on flexible working, please visit:
www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Claiming for a new child

There is a lot of financial support available for families when you have or adopt a new baby. Most benefits and entitlements can be backdated only for a short period, so it's best that you claim them as soon as your baby is born.

To get in depth advice on how to manage and plan your budget, or to stay on top of the family finances after the arrival of your bundle of joy, please visit:
www.parentsguidetomoney.co.uk

Child benefit

Child benefit is a tax-free benefit paid to most people who have children. It doesn't matter how much you earn, and it doesn't depend on national insurance contributions. Child benefit can be claimed by anyone regardless of their age.

You get £20 cash a week for your first born or only child. For each subsequent child, there is an additional weekly payment of £13.20. If you have twins, you can claim the higher rate for one of them, whichever child was born first.

Please note that child benefit is the 'gateway' benefit for all additional financial assistance that are offered to parents.

For more information, please visit:
www.hmrc.gov.uk/childbenefit

Tax Credit

There are two types of tax credit: Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit are available to help you pay for childcare and top up your earnings.

Child tax credit

Child tax credit is a tax-free income to help support families with children regardless of whether the parents work. Tax credit is made up of a number of different elements. Child tax credit is made up of the family element and the child element payable to each child.

You can claim child tax credit if you are responsible for at least one child or young person aged between 16, and 20 if they are still in full time education. The amount you will get may differ depending on your income.

All families with an income of less than £50,000 a year will get at least £545 a year from the 'family element' of the credit. If you have a child aged one or under, or with a disability, you may be entitled to more.



Element	Description	Entitlement for 2009/10
Family	The basic element for families responsible for one or more children.	£545 per year
Family – child under one year old	For families responsible for one or more children under the age of one. Note: only one payment may be available regardless of how many children under the age of one	£545 per year
Child	For each child or young person you are responsible for.	£2,235 per year
Disability	This is one payment for each child you are responsible for if you are receiving Disability Living Allowance for the child, or the child is registered blind or has been taken off the blind register in the 28 weeks before the date of claim.	£2,670 per year (an additional £1,075 is awarded if your child is severely disabled)

For more information, please visit - www.hmrc.gov.uk/Taxcredits

Working tax credit (WTC)

Working tax credit is a tax-free payment for people who are working and are on a low income. You don't have to have children to qualify for WTC. If you have children, or are responsible for a child, you may be able to top up your income to help towards childcare costs. This is known as the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The claimant has to be aged 16 or over and work at least 16 hours a week.

Please note that you may be able to claim working tax credit while on paternity leave, provided that you worked at least 16 hours a week before the leave began.

For more information, please visit: www.direct.gov.uk/WorkingTaxCredit

Income support

Income support is available to people who are on low income. The main aim is to bridge the gap between your needs and your income. The amount

of income support you could receive is entirely based on your personal circumstances. For instance, you get more income support if you are a lone parent and are responsible for children under 12.

To find out more information on whether you qualify for Income Support, please visit - www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Child Trust Fund (CTF)

Children born on or after 1st September 2002 will receive a £250 voucher from the government to start their account. This account belongs solely to your child and they are entitled to this fund after their 18th birthday. It is described as a long term saving and investment account to support your child's future. Children from lower income families will receive an extra £250.

For more information, please visit: www.childtrustfund.gov.uk

Drug and alcohol abuse

Fathers who abuse drugs hurt themselves and their families. Parental alcohol and drug abuse increase the incidence of family violence, divorce, financial problems and exposure to crime. Children of drug and substance users suffer the most, and it can have direct effects on their physical and mental health. It also influences their decisions about use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Poor relationships between fathers and their children also negatively influences child's future.

According to the 'National Survey on Drug use and Health' almost one in



twelve (7.9 per cent) fathers living with adolescents aged 12 to 17 had an alcohol use disorder. Fathers might want to give up taking drugs due to the adverse effect it has on their families, but it is often not easy. As much as they want to reduce their drug and alcohol misuse, they don't know who to talk to or where to seek help.

Below are some useful organisations and agencies working locally and nationally to support fathers with drug and alcohol advice.

Useful contacts

ADFAM

Information and advice for families affected by drugs and alcohol including an online database of local support groups.

Telephone no: 020 7928 8898

www.adfam.org.uk

FRANK

Confidential advice and information on drugs and drug use.

Helpline no: 0800 77 66 00 (24 Hours)

www.talktofrank.com

ADIBOP (Asian Drugs Information Befriending and Outreach Project)

This project aims to prevent illegal drug use in Asian communities and provide convenient & confidential services in a culturally sensitive manner.

Telephone no: 01582 51 95 04

www.cycd.org.uk/2009/07/17/adibop

CAN (drug alcohol and homelessness)

Provides a range of drug, alcohol and homelessness services throughout Northamptonshire, Luton and Bedfordshire.

www.can.org.uk

LDASS

The Luton Drug and Alcohol Specialist Service offers a drug and alcohol dependency treatment service to people of Luton and South Bedfordshire.

Address: 15 – 17 Cardiff Road, Luton, LU1 1PP

Telephone no: 01582 52 88 80

[/www.blpt.nhs.uk](http://www.blpt.nhs.uk)

PUKE (Prevention Understanding Knowledge Education)

A dedicated specialist alcohol and other drug service for young people in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Telephone no: 01582 72 34 34

www.alcohol-services.co.uk

Fathering a teenager

Teenagers present a whole new set of challenges to parents, as they strive to develop their own identity and become an adult. Being a good father means being supportive and providing discipline, while still listening to your child and getting to know the adult they are becoming. Changes physical and emotional, may mean your child's behaviour becomes different and difficult overnight, but the phase will pass. The patience you developed when your child was small will certainly come in handy again now!

As a dad, you can't take a back seat when it comes to raising teenagers. Here are some key notes to help you father a teenager:

- you can't control their world, but you can still play a substantial role in helping them make informed decisions
- monitor your teen's activities. You still can and it still counts
- most things about their world are changing. Don't let your love be one of them
- loosen up a bit but remember it is important not to let go of them. An element of discipline should exist in their lives.

Maintaining a good relationship with your teenager is essential as teens very much need their parents for help and advice in this critical stage of their lives. They might not want you to be around at times, and they might make it clear that they don't want your advice, but make sure you are still there, ready to listen and help them if needed. You must take the initiative to keep bonding with your child. Try different ways of talking with or adapting to their needs, and try to understand them more. Your teenager will need your love and acceptance more than ever.

Father to a disabled child

When a parent first learns of their child's disability, it can be a frightening and life changing experience. You may feel very mixed emotions, including anger, disbelief, sorrow, shock, guilt and confusion. In the first few days and even months after the diagnosis, parent's may struggle to come to terms with the news of a child's disability. With support, planning and access to the right resources and networks, raising a disabled child is a life affirming and wonderful experience.



can cause problems, and even put strain on your relationship. Recognising, acknowledging and expressing your feelings can help you to build a stronger, lasting relationship with your partner. Accept that you are in this journey and take joint responsibility, it will help you and your partner in facing any challenges with a positive attitude. This means pulling together as a team!

It takes a special man who can handle the financial, physical, and emotional pressures that comes with a disabled child. A disabled child may require more of your time, attention and resources, and for some this may appear daunting. Look beyond the outer wrapper of the disability to the child within, you will see that your child has so much to give. Love them and they will love you back freely, generously and without expectation.

You might feel that you are on the threshold of a journey, with no map or directions to follow. Parenthood always feels like that. This sense of uncertainty and lack of control can put a lot of pressure on you and your partner. It

There is a general perception that health professionals do not engage fathers in a significant way and tend to focus more on the support for the child and mother. Father's are greatly affected by their child's disability and it is important for fathers to be involved and establish their own relationship with professionals who work with children. Dads also need a safe place where they can let their emotions come out and not feel isolated. This could be through a counsellor a support group who work with fathers who have children with additional needs. To find out more specific information relevant to your child's needs and to be signposted to

professionals working locally within Luton, please contact the Disability Information Officer from Luton Children and Families Information Officer on 01582 54 79 83.

Below are some organisations working nationally and locally that can be a tool for fathers, and give access to information, support and resources. These organisations help dads build a special bond with their child.

Useful contacts

Disabled Parents Network

A national organisation, which provides information, advice and peer support to disabled parents and their families. General Enquiries and Helpline no: 0300 3300 639
www.disabledparentsnetwork.org.uk

Contact a family

This registered UK charity provides support, advice and information for families with disabled children, no matter what their health condition. Free Helpline no: 0808 808 3555.
www.cafamily.org.uk

Bliss

The special care baby charity, which provides vital support and care to premature and sick babies across the UK.

Free Helpline no: 0500 618 140
www.bliss.org.uk/

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC)

The council for disabled children is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England. For more information on the council for disabled children, please contact. Telephone no: 020 7843 1900
partner.ncb.org.uk/

Parent Partnership Services (PPS)

Statutory Services that offer information, advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people with special education needs (SEN). PPS also helps parents get in touch with other local and national organisations. Telephone no: 0207 843 6058
www.parentpartnership.org.uk

Luton Parent Partnership Services

Luton PPS offers parents of children with additional needs have direct access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the special needs of their children so that they can make appropriate, informed decisions. Telephone no: 01582 54 81 56
www.luton.gov.uk/parentpartnership

The Disability Resource Centre

This centre is for local users in Bedfordshire and Luton providing range of information services to give people with disabilities. Open Monday to Friday 10.00am – 16.00pm.

For more information -

Telephone no: 01582 470 900

www.drcbeds.co.uk

Action for Children

This is the leading UK provider of family and community centres, children's services in rural areas, services for disabled children and their families, and services for young people leaving care.

Telephone no: 0300 123 2112

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Single parenting

Parenting is not an easy task, and sometimes, for any number of reasons, you may find yourself meeting this challenge alone. Most single parents do a fantastic job and you must remember, despite many challenges on the road ahead, your child is counting on you. Being a single father could feel like being superman, and often involves doing super dad stuff.

Remember though you may be a single dad, you are not alone. There

are many single fathers groups and organisations with experience in helping fathers. Try contacting the group Gingerbread (details below) or the Luton Children and Families Information Service which can provide you with information on fathers groups running in your area to help you connect with other fathers facing similar challenges.

Useful contacts

This project is aimed at providing the same degree of support for single fathers as is available for single mothers in the UK.

Telephone no: 0203 1552091

www.dadshouse.co.uk

Only Dads - Celebrating Single Parenting

Support single parents who are trying to cope against the odds by signposting them to the best possible professional advice available. This website meet the needs of all single parents from all walks of life through a one stop shop.

Telephone no: 01803 868683

www.onlydads.org

Dads UK

Information, advice and support for lone fathers.

www.dadsuk.com

Lone Parents

This support site, aims to provide a virtual meeting place for single lone parent mums and dads, thereby helping to reduce the isolation and loneliness that lone single parents sometimes feel.

www.lone-parents.org.uk

Gingerbread (Single Parents, Equal Families)

Gingerbread offers lone parents and their children practical and emotional support, including benefits, education and housing.

The helpline is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Wednesdays 9am to 8pm.

Helpline no: 0808 802 0925

www.gingerbread.org.uk

FQ Magazine

This bi-monthly magazine is an essential parenting magazine for new and single dads.

www.fqmagazine.co.uk

Parenting programmes

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities parenting programme

The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities programme (SFSC) is designed for parents of children aged 3 to 18 years. Ranges of teaching methods are used, with regular opportunities for parents to try practical activities. SFSC is an inclusive evidence based parenting programme designed to promote protective factors associated with better outcomes for children.

Core areas covered in the programme are:

- **enhancing relationships** -

Supporting the development of healthy relationships within families and encouraging

parents to support their children to develop healthy and respectful relationships



- **rights of passage** - Allowing parents to explore their child's needs and the process of moving children through the stages of development towards adulthood
- **ethnic/cultural/spiritual/family roots** - Exploring the value base and traditions underpinning parenting choices
- **community involvement** - Supporting parents to become more active in their locality and to build skills and confidence to better access local resources.

Luton's ongoing evaluation of the programme has found that parents enjoy participating. Many parents have decided to continue to meet after the end of the course as they value the chance to talk to other parents helpful and understanding. There is also the option of Fathers Only Parenting Group to meet the diverse needs of parents in Luton.

Standard triple P

Triple P aims to prevent severe behavioural, emotional and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents. This

programme is designed to provide parents with one to one support. It's a broad focus programme of 8 - 10 sessions. The programme is designed for those parents who may require intensive support in positive parenting skills, and enables them to transfer what they learn in one situation and use it in other situations. This programme aims to tackle aggressive and defiant behaviour. This is achieved through:

- increasing parents abilities to manage common behaviour problems and developmental issues
- reducing parents use of coercive and harsh methods of discipline
- improving parents communication about parenting issues
- reducing parenting stress associated with raising children.

For further information on these programmes, please contact: Parenting Support Commissioning Team, on 01582 54 89 85 / 54 89 76

