

Promoting the uptake of family hubs services: The development and evaluation of behavioural science-informed messages to promote a support group for new fathers

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1. BACKGROUND

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned behavioural science research to support the evaluation of four Local Authority (LA) interventions designed to promote the uptake of services delivered by family hubs, especially by disadvantaged and vulnerable families.
- Sheffield City Council (SCC) were one of 4 selected LAs and wanted to increase the engagement of new fathers across the region with a 'New Fathers Support Group'.
- Evidence points to fathers being at increased risk of mental health problems during the postnatal period^{1,2}
- Several studies have highlighted that there are major barrier for fathers accessing parental support, including lack of knowledge and awareness of the services available^{3, 4,5},
- Fathers often feel that parenting programmes and support are more targeted at mothers³



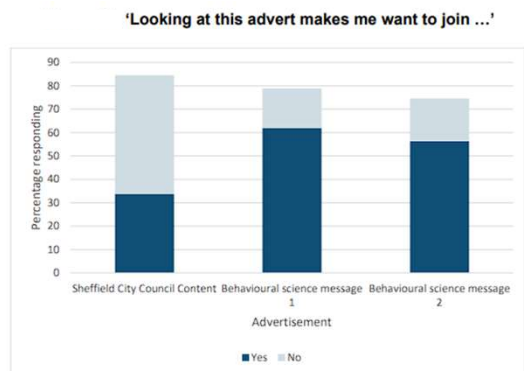
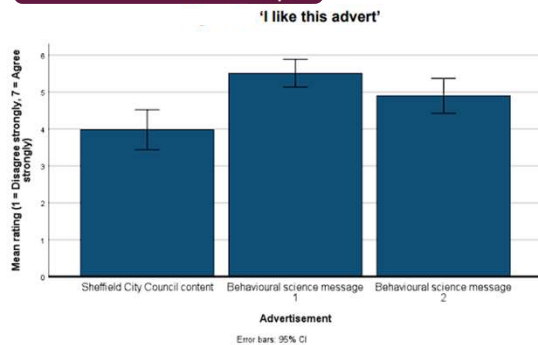
2. AIM

To use the COM-B model to explore barriers and facilitators to new fathers accessing a 'New Father Support Group', and to design new behavioural science informed communications to increase engagement.

3. METHODS

- Phase One: Behavioural analysis** 2 stakeholder workshops to explore barriers / facilitators; insights from existing messaging; persona generation; discussion on potential messaging
- Phase Two: Qualitative interviews** 5 interviews with new dads in Sheffield leading to final message development and design
- Phase Three: Online questionnaire** Participants (n = 49 new fathers in Sheffield)
 - Method:* viewed three different advertisement posters (order randomised between Ps), one based on Sheffield City Council's previous advertising content two informed by behavioural science
 - After viewing each advert, participants were asked multiple Likert scaled questions to capture the extent to which the messages overcame the previously identified barriers.

4. FINDINGS



The adverts informed by behavioural science performed better than Sheffield City Council's advertisement material^{6,7}:

- ✓ they were more liked
- ✓ they were felt to use clearer language
- ✓ they included images that appealed more
- ✓ they provided more clarity about whether the New Fathers Support Group costs money

Having seen Behavioural Science Message 1 (shown above) participants:

- felt more knowledgeable about the New Fathers Support Group
- felt they would meet other fathers similar to them
- felt happy to share both their positive and negative experiences as a father
- were more likely to respond 'yes' to whether they'd like to leave their email address
- were more likely to agree with the statement 'I would not feel nervous or embarrassed to join the New Fathers Support Group'.

5. CONCLUSION

- Messaging informed by behavioural science and matched to key barriers to engagement with services can produce better outcomes than messaging developed without behavioural science.
- Local authorities wishing to increase uptake of support services should consider utilising behavioural science in messaging development.

With thanks to



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