

Feedback from Participants

All participants were invited to complete and return a Feedback Form before they left the venue. Fifty-seven people offered their suggestions. The following is a summary of the feedback received ...

Area \ Rating	Poor	Just OK	Good	Very Good	Excellent	No Answer
Booking System	0	0	5	25	25	2
Venue	0	1	8	22	26	0
Food	0	0	9	16	31	1
Length of Event	0	4	13	20	19	1
Cost	0	0	4	11	40	2
Overall level of Satisfaction	1	3	9	17	26	1

** Numbers in cells relate to the actual number of people who expressed a preference*

What did you enjoy most / least about the day? ...

A. Most:

Almost everyone listed something that they enjoyed about the conference. The things which scored highest in this section were:

- ✓ Opportunities to network with new people.
- ✓ Meeting people who share aspirations and vision, and reducing sense of isolation.
- ✓ Round table format and group discussion.
- ✓ Sharing personal experiences and ideas.
- ✓ Relaxed and informal atmosphere with sense of light-hearted fun.
- ✓ Morning sessions and the factual/theoretical information which was presented.
- ✓ Variety of methods used e.g. formal input, group work, quiz, sing-song, creative brainstorming etc.
- ✓ Enthusiasm of the facilitators and participants.
- ✓ The focus on the positive side of fathering/fatherhood.
- ✓ The openness of participants at the meeting.
- ✓ Range of innovative ideas generated.
- ✓ Meeting other dads and discussing parenting from a personal as well as a professional perspective.
- ✓ Event timekeeping.
- ✓ Background 'housekeeping' and organisational tasks all went very smoothly.
- ✓ Venue.
- ✓ Lunch.

Affirming Quote of the Day:

"This is probably the most relaxed/informal yet most productive conference I've ever attended"

B. Least:

Compared to the "Enjoyed Most" responses, this section was relatively very small (six respondents). However, a number of crucial points of learning were identified:

- The event did not focus on institutional power and how this affects a father's role (i.e. Patriarchy).
- There were few practical ideas of what works with dads - except in small group discussions.
- The discussion on fathers has not moved on much from two years ago.
- This event followed some of the same format and content as the "It Can Be Done" conference.
- Little new learning was presented.
- Hearing more actual fathers' experiences - as main speakers - would have been beneficial.
- The morning session on "What is said about Dads" was confused and too long.
- Did not spend enough time discussing the main theme of the conference.
- Some of the discussion sessions were quite long.
- There was a lack of opportunity to move around conference tables and network with others.
- Would have liked more time to discuss issues at the table/in small groups.
- Singing was embarrassing.

Challenging Quote of the Day:

"I felt there were dads attending the day who really wanted to share their experiences of being a dad, and professionals wanting useful information. They can't be combined effectively in such a short session. Can it be separated out?"

Will you be able to use anything from today in your own work?

When asked if they would be able to use anything from the conference in their own work, the following responses were received:

Answer:	Number:
Yes	48
Possibly	2
No	2
Didn't Answer	5

** Numbers in cells relate to the actual number of people who expressed a preference*

Those who said "no" did not give any further comment. One of the "possibly" respondents said they would need to build upon what they had experienced a bit more before moving forward. The other person was encouraged, but added that they would have liked more practical ideas on what works and what doesn't work with fathers.

Most people who said "yes" gave some further information. This included:

- ✓ I have some ideas now how to make family work more inclusive.
- ✓ It was a wonderful experience which gave me the motivation I needed to work with fathers.
- ✓ I feel I have the moral support of a large number of people.
- ✓ I now know other organisations to contact if I need more information.
- ✓ Made some good contacts with people actually working with fathers and hope to speak to these people in the future about practical partnerships.
- ✓ Men are good for children and active fathering extends men's life expectancy.
- ✓ Heard some great ideas, pointers and practical ideas in my small group.
- ✓ I'm encouraged!
- ✓ I'm meeting-up with a few people from my table to organise some events.
- ✓ I'm more enthusiastic about going forward with my work.
- ✓ My mind was opened to a lot of things which should have been very obvious but weren't! There are lots of hidden issues for fathers.
- ✓ I have more ideas for encouraging fathers to participate in our own programme.
- ✓ I'd like to set-up a "Dad's Island" event in Letterkenny.
- ✓ It will help me to talk to new fathers about being a father.
- ✓ Generated plenty of ideas for the Health Service Strategy.
- ✓ I feel a bit more aware about the need to check-out assumptions and provide information specifically for fathers.
- ✓ Some of the theoretical stuff.
- ✓ Contacts will help with my research.
- ✓ I am now a bit more aware of fathers' problems when I deal with them through my work.
- ✓ I will try to set-up a local network in our own area.
- ✓ I learned a lot about "male language" and how/why it operates.
- ✓ Looking forward to the networking possibilities.
- ✓ Important contacts were made.

What would you like to see organised (if anything) as a follow-up to this event?

- **Yearly conference** with a specific theme e.g. Early Years and Fatherhood.
- Event focusing on hearing **fathers' experiences** as parents.
- **Skills/methods workshop** on practical ways to engage with/work with dads.
- **Study visit** to hear about what is happening locally and further afield.
- A mechanism whereby people can **meet regularly** (quarterly?) to share experience, discuss ideas and support each other - especially 'ground level'/'coal face' workers.
- A **residential** (weekend?) to give time for a group of people to build relationships and explore issues in-depth. Possibly look at issues through art and drama.
- Parenting skills **workshops for dads**.
- **More fathers involved** at the next event - this should be a longer day.
- Events with **high profile speakers** from outside the north of Ireland.
- Exploration of **men's roles** in society.
- Something that targets **senior management** and funding bodies.
- **Website** about this work.
- **Formal network** where you "sign-up" to join.
- **Contact list** of participants to aid future networking.
- A **report** on today.

Any other comments or suggestions included ...

- Thank you for an informative, interesting, fun and useful day.
- We need to start to make links between themes e.g. father, community, schools, skills etc.
- Keep up the good work. This is the start of something important.
- Felt a lot of time was spent challenging professionals' opinions about fathers as good parents when we are already aware of this.
- Great - but could we have a longer conference next time?
- Sometimes people who had experiences of single-parent families dominated the conversation with their negative views on fathers rather than focusing on their strengths.
- Good fun, not stuffy.
- Have more women presenters (and stories from mothers in relation to fathering) at next event.
- Very entertaining. Hopefully, the birth of the positive masculinity movement!
- Debunked the notion of the 'right sort' of fathers.
- Are we only influencing ourselves? Preaching to converted and all that.
- Thank you for organising and promoting this important issue - well done!
- Get young dads to share their experiences in the future.
- Well worth coming to.
- Got a feeling that getting all the organisers on the floor at some stage was important to the organisers.
- Could only stay for the morning session, but well worth the visit.
- Well done. Have the next conference in Omagh.
- The day was well organised, enjoyable and gave me a lot of food for thought. (Did not want to give all my marks as '5' since when one achieves excellence there is nothing to strive for!)
- Many thanks for an opportunity to network and begin to think seriously about this very important work.
- Looking forward to being part of the Dads Express development.
- Could we have information stands for all organisations at future events?
- One of the best days I have had in a long time. Thank you!
- A shorter day: start later and end earlier to allow for long distances some people have to travel. The very early start may stop parents attending, as they need to leave children to school and collect them after school.
- Please send contact details of members of the planning group to all participants so we can feed-in where appropriate with ideas for the next conference.
- It was great to be a part of it.
- Were there crèche facilities today?
- Very enjoyable.
- Few statutory services were present at the conference. The "0-4 year old" providers have a big input and have a set attitudes approach. How do we impact upon this mindset?
- Delegate list on the day would have been useful for networking.
- Liked the creative approach to the day - light feeling, serious learning! Thank you.
- Would have liked a "roving mike" - couldn't hear people at other end of the room during feedback sessions - or ask presenter to repeat comments from the floor.
- Excellent day. Let's have more of the same.

Thought from Participant:
"Long journeys begin with the first step"