

Case Study



Project

Lads, Dads, Men and Boys Club

Organisation

Lads, Dads, Men and Boys Club

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Contact

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About the Organisation

Ken Mcayghey is the Headmaster of Ballykelly Primary School and started the Lads, Dads, Men and Boys Club as he felt the fathers in the community did not take enough to do with their children's education. Ken believed getting fathers involved would have many positive impacts on their children's social relationships.

After talking to some of the few fathers that did attend parent meetings they suggested the lack of interest was mainly because fathers felt that contact with the school was mostly through the mothers and they did not feel part of it. This led Ken to believe the solution was to have fathers involved in the school and their children's activities without the presence of women.

Project overview

The project is aimed at fun learning and family building through educational and recreational activities. Its initial aim was to involve fathers in their children's lives. But, through early success the project is now aiming to engage all parents with their children at school.

A committee made up of volunteering parents runs the project. Grants are used to provide training to parents in leadership and childcare and also to cover the costs of activities for parents and their children to do together.

What has it achieved?

This project has grown from a fledgling group to a large and active community organisation.

There have been noticeable improvements in the attendance and attainment levels of children. The greater sense of community around the school has also improved the community spirit in the local area.

How did the project get people involved?

The project ran its first activity after consulting with fathers already active in the school community. This was to find out the reasons for low levels of involvement from other fathers. The 'scary walk', a walk through the local park late at night, was attended by between 180 and 200 people. The group were then able to engage with these other fathers.

Now the group is fully established and linked directly to the school. There is no shortage of people who want to get involved. The link with the school also adds credibility to the project which helped in the early days of the club.

What was innovative and what worked well?

Engaging with parents in a school setting led to high numbers engaging with the programme.

Restricting the activities to only fathers and sons in the first instance went against modern politically correct practices. But this focus proved to be one of the strengths of the project, especially in the early stages.

Later in the project girls started to ask if they could join in the activities with their father as well. The high demand from children strengthens the long-term sustainability of the programme.



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Were there any unexpected outcomes?

The school previously experienced a high level of antisocial behaviour from the children, but since the programme has started the level of antisocial behaviour has decreased.

The community in general is a friendlier place. Parents are on first name terms with teachers through the programme. Children are finding it easier to make friends as their parents become more involved in their school lives. The children are more confident and motivated to do well at school.

The future...

The programme will keep running and expanding as long as it has the support of the local parents and children. Ken will try to access funding from wherever possible. The club is registered as a charity and has received money from BIG and Children in Need previously. Local businesses also contribute with prizes for events. There is also an army base next door to the school and they become involved in some of the activities as well as providing resources for activities including expertise and equipment.

The project wants to expand into home learning and continue to positively influence family building.

In the future Ken wants to train up volunteers so that he can retire. He also wants to bring in people with fund raising experience. The fund raising aspect of the project has been difficult as Ken is not an expert and some application processes are complex. However he said that he would apply for BIG funding in the future as he found the staff helpful and co-operative throughout the whole process.

The project will continue to fundraise themselves, as well as keeping up various 'pay in' events.

Lessons from the project

There are many lessons to take from the Ballykelly Lads, Dads, Men and Boys project about how involving fathers in children's education and play activities can have wide reaching impacts.

- *The use of a school as a focal point for a family based initiative was successful due to the large number of people accessible through the school.*
- *The impact of social interaction between children and their father as part of their education has wider reaching impacts than improving attainment levels.*
- *There is a constant demand for funding to keep projects such as this going as there is always a cost attached to delivering activities. This will always threaten the sustainability of the project.*