

# Fathers' Mental Health and Well-being Concerns within the Transition to Fatherhood; a Scoping Review

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# Transition to Fatherhood?

The transition to fatherhood (defined as physical, psychological and social changes in the lives of fathers from as early as conception to after birth) can be a very stressful and isolating experience, that can have considerable impacts on fathers' well-being and mental health (1).

Pregnancy and  
Childbirth

=



Elevated depressive  
and anxiety symptoms  
in fathers [2,3]

Fathers have recalled non-existent support and poor information/education. Research is needed to inform the development of tailored interventions for all parenting experiences [1].

# Aim of Scoping Review

## Gaps in research

- Past studies/reviews conducted within westernised societies (America and Australia).
- Literature exploring paternal perinatal mental health adopts mainly quantitative approaches (depression symptomology rather than subjective experiences).



## Aim

- a). To appraise and synthesise qualitative literature identifying fathers' concerns and challenges within the transition to fatherhood that may be impacting mental health and well-being experiences.
- b). To explore fathers' experiences of antenatal programmes, and psychological and social support, to understand how we can better support fathers in addressing above concerns.

# Qualitative Evidence Synthesis



Exploration of fathers mental health and well-being concerns within the transition to fatherhood, approaches to prevention and/or providing support in helping fathers address mental health and well-being concerns

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**Citation**

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**Review question**

Exploration of fathers mental health and well-being concerns within the transition to fatherhood, approaches to prevention and/or providing support in helping fathers address mental health and well-being concerns.

PROSPERO (Reference number: CRD42022313815).



1. Eligibility Criteria



2. Searches were conducted with **Medline, Embase, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Scopus, ASSIA** and grey literature OATD and relevant websites.

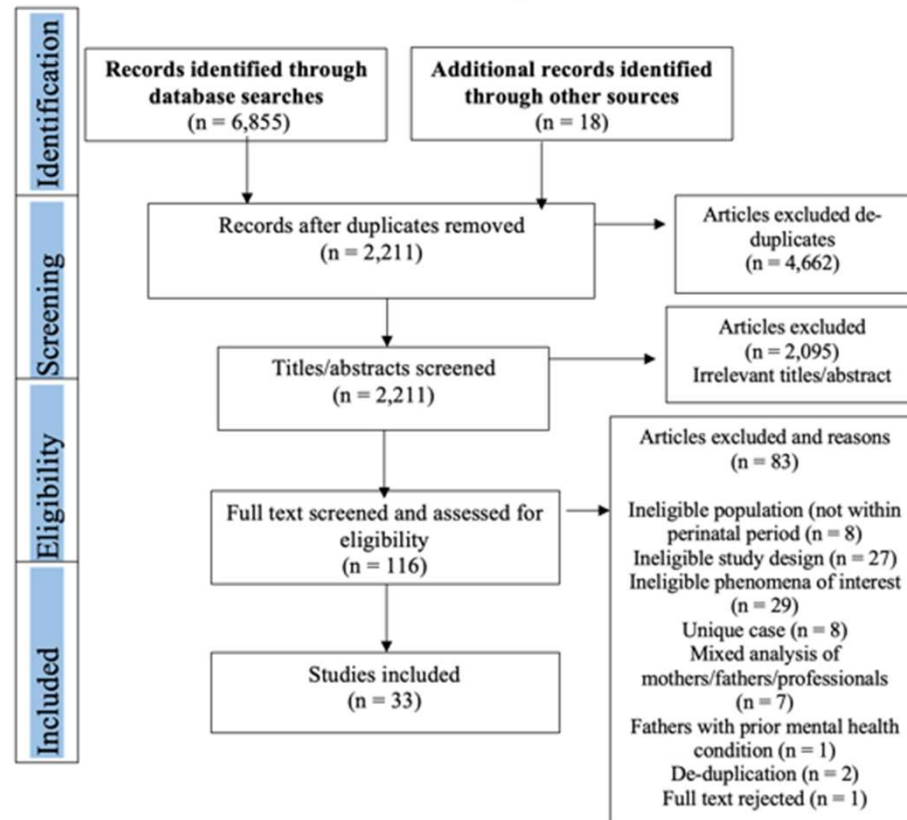


3. Studies were screened by two reviewers (abstract/titles and full text).

	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Participants/Population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fathers (not subjected to biological fathers) in the perinatal period (defined as conception- two years post-partum).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not relate to fathers well-being/mental health within the perinatal period.</li> </ul>
<b>Intervention(s), Exposure(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative studies that consider new or recent fathers' mental health/well-being concerns within the transition to fatherhood.</li> <li>Explore fathers' experiences of antenatal programmes and support (psychological and social).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe mental illness prior to becoming fathers</li> <li>Focus on experiences of specific events perinatal loss, birth trauma, NICU experiences and Covid-19.</li> </ul>

# Search Results and Data Extraction

PRISMA Flow Diagram



**4. Data extraction** – standardised data extraction table based on the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) data extraction tool [4].



**5. Critical Appraisal** – JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research [5].



# Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Workshops

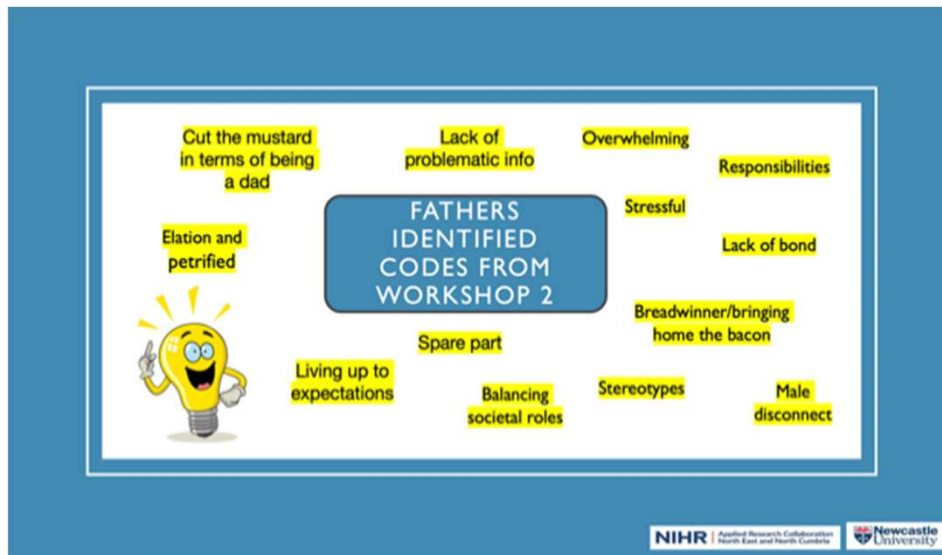
## 3 online workshops with 4 fathers

- Interactive open coding
- Interpretation of descriptive themes
- Analytical theme development.



“I thought they were really great, was good to talk about the experience with other dads who had experienced similar.”

“I was able to reflect on becoming a dad through the workshops, I don't think I would have had the chance or reflected.”



## Dads share their mental health concerns about the transition into fatherhood

[BLOG](#)



*'Dads want to be referred to as participants not passengers within the fatherhood journey'*

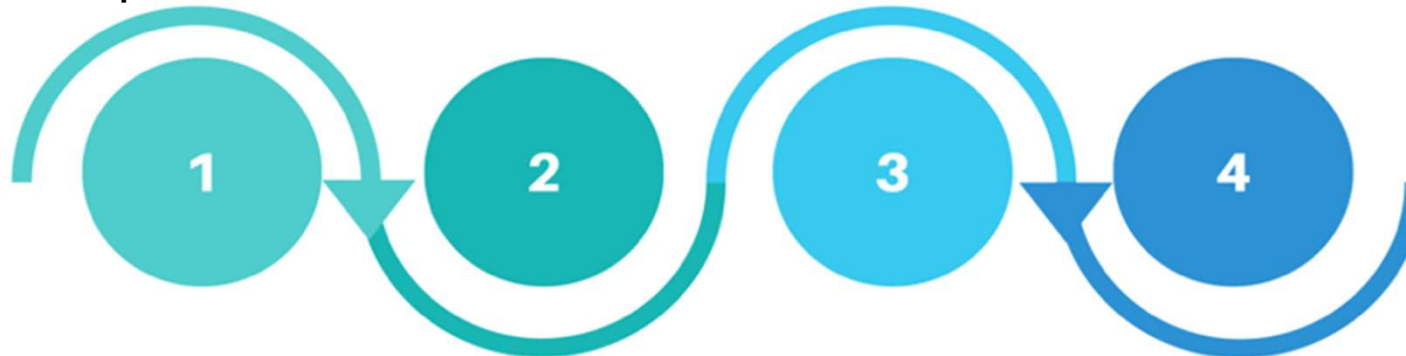
<https://arc-nenc.nihr.ac.uk/news/dads-mental-health/>

# Synthesised Findings

## Inductive Thematic Synthesis Approach [6]

1. 'Invasion of Infant' Perinatal Adjustment Demands
2. 'My Child is My Partners Child' Inequality in Parenthood from Mother

### Diminished partner relationship



1. Exclusion and Degrading Humour from Healthcare Professionals.
2. Neglect of Fatherhood Education as a toolkit

### Forgotten Entity within the Perinatal Experience

### 'Provider or Protector?' Multiplicity of fatherhood Identification

1. Culturally Specific Fatherhood Expectations
2. Parental Confrontation from Generation Gap

### 'I battle it myself' Masculine Ideals within Fatherhood

1. Isolation of Emotional Struggles
2. 'Is this normal?' Desperate for Validation from Peers

# To conclude

**Future mental health support should be designed to cater and address these concerns.**

**Recommendations include:**

Peer support groups (charities/organisations).

Provision of co-production and NHS funded roles (peer support workers) = co-designed decision making and health information.

Healthcare NHS training resources and time (mental health joint appointments/university training).



**Submitted revisions awaiting response**

BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth





## Next Steps Qualitative Study



a). Exploring fathers lived mental health and well-being experiences, accessing available support and programmes.

**Semi structured interviews with fathers.**



b). Exploring professionals' awareness and perspectives of current paternal perinatal mental health support and care.

**Semi structured interviews with professionals (VCSE and Social Care Services).**

# Thank you

Fathers

Supervisors Dr. Catherine El-Zerbi, Dr. Ruth McGovern and Prof. Judith Rankin

**NIHR** | Applied Research Collaboration  
North East and North Cumbria

Thank you for listening, any questions?

Dads share their mental health concerns about the transition into fatherhood

BLOG



*'Dads want to be referred to as participants not passengers within the fatherhood journey'*

## References

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3. Chhabra J, McDermott B, Li W. Risk factors for paternal perinatal depression and anxiety: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*. 2020 Oct;21(4):593.
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5. Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) (2016). Critical Appraisal Tools. Retrieved from <http://joannabriggs.org/research/critical-appraisal-tools.html>
6. Thomas J, Harden A. Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC medical research methodology*. 2008 Dec;8(1):1-0.