

Family Relationships and Attachments

High Achieving White Working Class (HAWWC) Boys



Key Facts

EVIDENCE

- The early months of a young child's life are very important developmentally but can be very stressful for parents. Many parents need support during these early months in their son's life.
- Parental health, including mental health and parental resilience in the face of stress and adversity, infuses the home ethos and atmosphere in which the young boy is anchored.
- Young children need to establish a deep attachment to their main carer(s), who provides the young boy with security, consistency of care and the confidence to trust. These deep psychological roots are linked also to intellectual development. Young boys need at least one person in their lives who would go to unreasonable lengths for them.
- Young boys can be an 'anchor' for their parent(s), providing deep meaning and purpose in their lives. They can be a stabilising and bonding force within the family.
- The style and nature of relationships and interactions between family adults and children, including siblings, provide the young boy with a strong model of how relationships work.
- The extended family can provide an important circle of care and support around the young boy and his parent(s), extending and enhancing his social, emotional and cognitive experiences, and providing respite for the main carer(s). Grandparents can be particularly important at this time.
- Family support and childcare services can provide additional strength to the web of support around the young boy and his family.
- Balancing parental employment and family life is a challenge for many families. For some parents being at home and raising their son during the early years of life is a priority but may cause financial stress. For others, returning to work means support is needed from the extended family and/or childcare providers to ensure continuity of care and a secure context for the child.



Project Findings

Stable, Loving, Committed and

Relaxed Attachments: The need for strong, secure and relaxed emotional attachments between the main carer(s) and close family and the young boy are essential to the young boy's wellbeing. These close attachments are characterised by affectionate, loving, playful, physical and committed interactions.

Parent's Stress Resilience: Stress and mental illness shape and infuse family relationships and interactions. Parents who demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity and have the strength to minimise its impact on their young boy, and protect him from its harmful effects can minimise its impact on the child, and strengthen the child's ability to cope. Some young boys can also act to protect and provide sanctuary for the parent.

Positive Family Relationships and

Interactions: Develop-

ing strong and positive relationships with the close and extended family offers the young boy

with a wider range of social and emotional experiences and access to adults and children at different ages and with different interests. Grandparents often play an important role in the young boy's early life.

Family Support: Family support and childcare services can provide a vital additional tier of support for both the young boy and the parent. Accessing this support early can prevent the escalation of need, add a great deal of value to family life and provide the young boy with experiences they might not have in the home. It works

ing best where family, child carers and

support agencies are in tune.

Balancing

Home and

Work

Commit-

ments: Balancing

home and work commitments can be very

difficult for a parent. How this is achieved is a very personal choice.

Where parents choose or are required to work, additional care and support is needed to ensure the child continues to thrive and develop and the parent feels secure that the child's needs are being fully met. Where the parent is at home, financial support may be needed, and also social support to prevent isolation and ensure the young boy has opportunities to socialise in a wider community.

More Information

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Action Points

- Giving parents time and opportunities to establish a close and loving attachment to their son is vital.
- Support to reduce stress levels in the family and build resilience for parents living in challenging circumstances or with mental health needs should be a priority.
- Interaction with siblings, the extended family and wider community provides the young boy with additional stimulation and role models. Grandparents can provide a special relationship which has long lasting effects.
- Early access to family support, childcare and early education can act to significantly enhance the quality of family life and the development of the young boy.
- Flexible working patterns for both parents can enhance family life and secure family finances.

HAWWC Boys Project Video Blogs



Close Relationships & Attachments



Family Support



Parenting Approach & Routines