

# Dads Matter

Every Dad, Every Child, Every Family

## Local Peer Hub Setup Guide

*Empower. Navigate. Unite.*

**Date:** 2026

Welcome to the **Dads Matter** community. By stepping up to create a Local Peer Hub, you are offering a vital lifeline to fathers navigating family court, separation, and the challenges of maintaining meaningful relationships with their children. This guide will provide you with the blueprint to establish a safe, effective, and supportive environment in your area.

Family court can be an incredibly isolating experience. Our national network provides vast resources, but there is no substitute for looking another father in the eye and saying, *"I understand. I've been there."*

## 1. The Vision: Why Local Hubs Matter

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A Dads Matter Local Peer Hub is designed to be:

- **A Safe Space:** Free from judgment, legal posturing, and stigma.
- **A Resource Center:** Where lived experience meets practical, actionable advice.
- **A Support Network:** Ensuring no father walks the path of separation alone.

## 2. Getting Started: The Foundation

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### Finding the Right Venue

Your venue sets the tone. It needs to be accessible, neutral, and conducive to private conversations.

- **Community Centers & Village Halls:** Often affordable or free for community groups. They provide neutral ground.
- **Quiet Pubs or Cafes:** Look for venues with private function rooms. Ensure it doesn't feel intimidating.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure the venue has parking, public transport links, and disabled access.

### Frequency & Timing

- **Consistency is Key:** Whether it's bi-weekly or monthly, stick to a schedule.
- **Timing:** Weekday evenings (e.g., 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM) often work best, allowing working fathers to attend.

### 3. Running Your First Meeting

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#### The Format

We recommend a structured but relaxed approach:

- 1. Welcome & Ground Rules (10 mins):** State the purpose of the meeting. Reiterate confidentiality.
- 2. Check-ins (30 mins):** Go around the room. Allow each man 2–3 minutes to introduce himself and state what brings him there. No interruptions.
- 3. Open Floor / Focused Topic (60 mins):** Discuss shared challenges (e.g., preparing for a CAFCASS interview, managing stress, or dealing with alienation).
- 4. Wrap Up & Signposting (20 mins):** End on a constructive note. Remind attendees of external resources.

#### The Role of the Facilitator

You are there to guide, not to fix.

- **Listen Actively:** Sometimes, fathers just need to be heard.
- **Manage Dominant Voices:** Ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. Gently guide the conversation back if it veers off-topic.
- **Keep it Constructive:** It is natural for men to feel angry at the system. Allow space to vent, but pivot towards constructive, actionable steps. We focus on the **Welfare Principle**—what is best for the child.

## 4. Safeguarding & Ground Rules

This is the most critical aspect of running a hub. You are dealing with vulnerable individuals in high-stress situations.

### The Code of Conduct

Every attendee must agree to the following:

- **Strict Confidentiality:** What is said in the room, stays in the room. No sharing of specific case details or names outside the hub.
- **Respectful Language:** Zero tolerance for aggressive, abusive, or derogatory language towards ex-partners, the courts, or other members.
- **No Unqualified Legal Advice:** We share experiences, not legal counsel. Always advise members to seek professional legal guidance where appropriate.

### Safeguarding (UK Guidelines)

While we offer peer support, you must be prepared for extreme distress.

- **Signposting:** If a member expresses intent to harm themselves or others, you have a duty of care. Keep a list of emergency numbers (Samaritans: **116 123**, local crisis teams) on hand.
- **Boundaries:** Do not take on the emotional burden of every member. Set strict boundaries regarding when and how members can contact you outside of meetings.

## 5. Marketing & Outreach

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How do you get fathers to walk through the door?

- **Local Digital Outreach:** Create a local Facebook group (e.g., “Dads Matter - [Your Town]”). Share practical advice and meeting dates.
- **Community Boards:** Place the official Dads Matter flyers in local supermarkets, libraries, and gyms.
- **Professional Networking:** Introduce your hub to local family solicitors, mediators, and Citizen’s Advice Bureaus. They are often looking for support groups to refer men to.

## 6. Support from Dads Matter HQ

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You are not doing this alone. As an official Dads Matter Hub leader, you receive:

- **Official Listing:** Your hub will be listed on our national website directory.
- **Marketing Materials:** Access to official branded templates for flyers and social media.
- **Direct Mentoring:** Access to our private forum for hub leaders, where you can share challenges and advice with other facilitators nationwide.

### Ready to launch?

Contact us at [info@dadsmatter.org.uk](mailto:info@dadsmatter.org.uk) to get your hub officially registered on the Dads Matter network.

*Thank you for stepping up. You are making a profound difference.*