

**FATHERS
IN KURDISH AND TURKISH SPEAKING
COMMUNITIES
-ISSUES AND NEEDS-**

PREPARED BY

**HEALTH ADVOCACY & COUNSELLING SERVICES
FOR KURDISH/TURKISH SPEAKING COMMUNITIES**

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Summary

This pilot project on “**Fathers in Kurdish and Turkish Speaking Communities-Issues and Needs**” was carried out as a result of a need identified by the work of health advocates, the mental health support worker and the parenting support worker of the Health Advocacy and Counselling Services for Turkish and Kurdish Speaking Communities, with funding from the Family Policy Unit of the Home Office.

It was a two-month project to ascertain the issues surrounding specifically the fathers in the Turkish and Kurdish speaking communities in Hackney.

The interviews were conducted with Turkish, Turkish Cypriot and Kurdish fathers as well as health and social care professionals dealing with them on their day to day problems. Included in our 16 interviewees there were 8 Kurdish, 6 Turkish and 2 Turkish Cypriots. These numbers are roughly representative of the local community which in this research will be referred to as the “Kurdish / Turkish Communities”. The Kurdish and Turkish components constitute the majority among the three (including Turkish Cypriot) subgroups concerned in Hackney.

Language and cultural barriers, unfamiliarity with the British health and education systems are the main problems of these parents who, on the whole, are refugees and asylum seekers. Substantial numbers have very serious additional mental and social problems, mainly arising from their immigration status.

The main recommendations to address these problems are:

- to urgently increase awareness among Kurdish and Turkish communities in relation to fathering issues;
- to inform relevant services such as schools, social and health services about the specific needs of Kurdish and Turkish fathers;
- to draw up a long term strategy for parents and fathers, with feedback from the same services, health and support services (such as our organisation) and community centres.

Further research and developmental work will be needed to address the above recommendations

Introduction and Background

This pilot project on “**Fathers in Kurdish and Turkish Speaking Communities-Issues and Needs**” was carried out as a result of a need identified by the work of health advocates, the mental health support worker and the parenting support worker of the Health Advocacy and Counselling Services for Turkish and Kurdish Speaking Communities, with funding from the Family Policy Unit of the Home Office. The project has been concluded to its findings after 2 months work .The project evolves around the day to day issues surrounding Kurdish and Turkish Fathers.

Members of the Kurdish and Turkish speaking communities are predominantly refugees and/or asylum seekers. According to the estimates of TKC organisations, the total number in London may well be over two hundred thousand. It is estimated that the majority live in the London Borough of Hackney. The combined number of Turks and Kurds in the borough are estimated to be around 30 000. Hackney is one of the most deprived areas in the U.K. It has a very high unemployment rate. Almost half the accommodation in Hackney is in council housing. There are a high number of immigrant and refugee populations with overcrowding, high rate of long term illness and perceived or real high crime rate. (“The Challenge, a Profile of Poverty in Hackney” by Steve Griffiths, L.B. Hackney publication and the “1991 Census”)

In terms of poverty, the worst affected sections are the recently arrived immigrants and refugees/asylum seekers.

Brief **background information** about the Turkish Speaking Communities in UK:

Turkish Cypriots are the oldest, and therefore, the most well established of the three groups which arrived in Britain at different times. The majority of Turkish Cypriots came to the UK in the early 1950s and 60s when the first political problems started between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island. Cyprus was still a British Crown Colony at that time and all Cypriots were considered to be British Citizens and were therefore allowed to enter and settle freely in Britain. This first wave of migration in the 50s and 60s by T. Cypriots was followed by a further influx after the partition of the island into Northern (Turkish) and Southern (Greek) Cyprus in 1974.

The first immigrants from mainland Turkey arrived in the early 70s after Turkey and Britain signed a labour agreement. But a large number of these early comers were ‘unauthorised’ or ‘undocumented’ workers.

The second large influx of Turkish immigrants was made up of political refugees who came to the UK following the military coup in Turkey in September 1980. Most of these refugees were political activists fleeing from persecution - and possible execution - some of whom have since been granted political asylum and then British Citizenship.

The third and the biggest refugee wave from Turkey was in April, May and June of 1989. These were almost all Kurds who were fleeing inhumane treatment by successive Turkish Governments and/or unbearable economic conditions. Although somewhat abated in the intervening period, this influx is still an ongoing process as the early comers of the third wave left family members, spouses, children, sisters, brothers or close relatives in Turkey and it has taken them years to be reunited. The asylum processes have slowed down and prolonged for years the uniting of asylum seekers' families. Currently, there are still many asylum seekers who have been waiting for 8 or 9 years for their cases to be processed.

This continuous process of influx has been going on for decades meaning that the size, of the community has been changing constantly.

“One of the problems we face we can’t understand how many actual Turkish/Kurdish users in relevant services. In monitoring sheets Turkish/Kurdish origin classified as ‘others’. Therefore when we want to access to the information we can not get exact user number.” (Worker)

Kurdish and Turkish fathers we have talked to, during this research, live in an environment where isolation, language barriers, and lack of access to the services are the main problems. These deprivations have been magnified by such poor social conditions as poverty, unemployment and inadequate housing. On top of all these, an insecure future in a complete different world has confronted them. They are also in constant emotional anguish due to leaving many loved ones behind.

Problems that Kurdish and Turkish fathers have to overcome are based on the reality that both socially and financially they are extremely insecure about their future. This insecurity further unfolds with lack of adequate language skills, lack of access to services and clash of different traditions and values. Fatherhood in Kurdish and Turkish communities in UK should be seen as a different practice in terms of their unique background as mentioned above.

Fathers in British society in general may have several problems, which Kurdish and Turkish fathers could easily identify themselves with. Nevertheless being a refugee adds a tough experience, and in terms of fathering , brings many vulnerabilities as

well as extreme measures.

These vulnerabilities include social isolation and lack of knowledge of the support services, schools in particular.

Clash of values and culture shock may result in extreme disciplinary measures.

Basic human instinct is protecting your offspring from outside dangers. Being too strict in some cases may result in tragic incidents such as committing suicides among teenage children. Having access to the information and support services may be critical for stable parenting and better family life. And yet, families from the Turkish and Kurdish speaking communities greatly lose out on what is available and what they are eligible for as a result of speaking very little or no English, not knowing the system as much as the system not reaching out to them.

The following are the main characteristics that affect many focus groups (e.g. parents, the elderly) in the Kurdish and Turkish communities.

Different ethnic backgrounds (Kurdish, Turkish, Turkish Cypriots) result in differences in cultural interaction with British metropolitan society.

Different tradition and customs affect different fatherhood and parenting. Most refugees come from the countryside and retain their patriarchal and feudal values.

There are immense differences in social, educational and professional backgrounds.

There are religious sectarian differences (e.g. Alevi, Sunni and others) resulting in different approaches to the same perceived problems within the communities.

Mental & physical well-being in refugee/asylum seeker communities

Aims & Objectives

Considering that it was going to be a pilot project within a defined time period, the project aims were identified as follows:

- To assess fathering support needs of Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot parents.
- To ascertain the accessibility of information and system resources for these fathers/parents as well as their use and satisfaction with them.
- To recommend possible solutions to the fathers' problems with a view to improve their parenting skills.
- To raise the profile and to create an understanding of the fatherhood/parenting needs in Kurdish, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot communities across the statutory sector (including Government departments) involved in the policy making, planning and provision of disabled children's services and services to meet the parenting needs of their mothers and fathers.

Methodology

This report is based on interviews with individual fathers in different settings such as health centres, community centres and commonly frequented cafes and clubs; information obtained through facilitated group meetings (focus groups) with Kurdish and Turkish fathers and interviews with professionals who deal with the Kurdish and Turkish communities.

Facilitated group meetings were held in a youth centre run by Hackney Council in Shoreditch. Ironically this was a place where many Kurdish and Turkish youngsters regularly attend, however their parents stepped in for the first time.

Two of three meetings were conducted in free flowing discussions around the issues stimulated by the showing of a video. It is called "Hear Our Voice" 11 Prepared by Health Advocacy and Counselling Services for Turkish and Kurdish Communities, 1999 in which Kurdish and Turkish Young people are telling their stories in a straightforward way. The last meeting of the group was attended by our organisation's Parenting Support Worker and as well as discussions, some information about the parenting services was also provided.

The questionnaires are presented in Appendix. They provided the base for discussions in both group and in individual meetings.

Findings and Discussion

In a relatively short time many of the refugees and asylum seekers have experienced very significant changes in their lives. One of the interviewees summarised the changes Kurdish and Turkish families have faced so far:

“We have had three different life styles so far. Firstly, in villages in Turkey. We lived in an environment where the dominant social force was the father-led family. Secondly, later on we moved to big cities. Our values and traditions changed considerably. Thirdly, when we came in to this country. It was a kind of shock. Everything was new to us. Lack of language skills prevented our adaptation and understanding the new environment.”(A father)

In order to understand main differences between parents in general in the UK and their counterparts from the Kurdish and Turkish communities, we will look at the main points drawn by a parenting guide below "Parenting Perspectives Page 23 by E. Howell, O. Montuschi (1997):

“WHAT DO PARENTS DO?

So, what is it that parents actually do? They are:

- Providers - of the appropriate physical and emotional environments in which their children can develop and grow into adults;
- Protectors - shielding their children from physical and emotional danger but, at the same time, allowing them to experience in an age appropriate way the consequences of their choices and actions;
- Guides and Teachers - setting expectations and boundaries for behaviour, providing guidelines and information which structure and inform children's behaviour and giving them a basis for developing their own ideas and self-discipline as they grow older;
- Problem-solvers and Mediators - modelling ways of handling conflict, challenge

and change and the prioritisation of needs through listening, negotiation and compromise;

- Managers - modelling the organisational skills necessary to meet the time demands of school, work and family life and carrying out the day-to-day organisation of the many facets of life with children;
- Transmitters of culture and values - through everyday words and actions, as well as direct teaching, communicating the values, traditions, cultural heritage and beliefs that are passed on to their children.”

These attributes are not met by all British parents. Nevertheless these represent what is expected from British parents in general. The Guide also points out that there could be differences in parenting in general. Although the guide concerns both fathers and mothers, fathers will be the main focus point in our research.

In “Carlton Parenting Campaign for Fathers”, fathers’ role is summarised in similar terms: *“Fathers are carers, companions, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers and playmates.” (1997).*

We will now examine each point in the above mentioned Parenting Guide to see how each of the points have changed in terms of Kurdish and Turkish Fathers since they moved to the UK.

Providers

In British society men/fathers are increasingly more involved with domestic activities. This is partly as a result of increase in the number of working women/mothers as well as other social changes.

“Mothers are in the out-of-home workforce as never before, which means that fathers are needed in the home as never before; children are fewer, and so time with them is more highly prized; divorce is more common (1 in 3 marriages in Europe will end in divorce), so fathers must create relationships with their children which are independent of their relationships with their wives; employment is less secure, and so men can not necessarily rely on work alone for satisfaction.” (Carlton Parenting Campaign for Fathers, 1997)

Since their move to this country, Kurdish and Turkish women/mothers followed a similar pattern. The main difference is that in terms of British society the change was gradual, but in the Turkish and Kurdish communities this change was almost overnight. However, the Kurdish and Turkish communities were not ready for this sudden change in their traditional life style. It caused many adaptation and responsibility sharing problems. Women/mothers suddenly found themselves doing housework, looking after children as well as working outside to earn money while fathers became more passive than ever. As a mother describes her experience in one community centre;

Men are the main breadwinners and the protectors in family life in Turkey. At least they have to be seen like that in front of their relatives and in their social environment. That's their duty. However, here, there is no pressure on them. One other thing is that men, here, are not economically very active and when they don't have regular job they lose self-confidence and self-respect somehow. Of course at the end of the day they are behaving as a man in terms of not doing housework and stuff like that.
(A Mother)

In Turkey men are the main providers in family. It is especially true in country life. In Kurdish part of Turkey where economy is still dependent on agricultural production, family life dominates and determines the individual's life. This sometimes reaches up to a point which young men may be wed to the women their family chooses.

"In the villages there is only one form of family. Father is the head of the family and the breadwinner mother sometimes work in the field but mostly does the housework and look after the children. And the children have to listen whatever their parents say, otherwise they will not be able to do anything." (A Father)

In Turkey city life is fairly different from rural life. However, some of the core cultural values are same. The importance of the family, the highly respected place of the elderly in family relations, strong relative networks etc. And also fathers/men are the main providers in families even though more and more women have tended to go out to work in recent years.

Being a provider is still the man's role. Yet there have been big changes in lifestyles since arrival in this country. Although in rural Turkey men were the sole providers, now women also work.

'In Turkey men go to say to fields to do harvesting or do some other work and they sometimes took their wives with them, sometimes they left their wives at home to do house work. This was normal. But here if the wives earn money they suddenly change.

'My wife too didn't work in Turkey. But she started working here. She is tired when she comes home. I was responsible of the raising the children. In a way I do what normally a mother does whilst my wife does what I am expected to do' (A Father)

Protectors

In Fatherhood "a volume of theoretical and empirical research in families" which is published in USA in 1995, one of the studies suggests that "...black parents who are more severe, punitive, and power assertive in the discipline of their children than whites" According to this study, "many parents' authoritarian controls may be designed to prepare children for a hostile world in which they will face racism and greater economic stress than white children" (Fatherhood)

In Kurdish and Turkish communities 'authoritarian' fathers would take extreme measures in order to protect their family. They have to fight and are ready to fight with the possible outside dangers they may not fully understand because they cannot speak English. Worrying that their offspring might lose their identity and culture they apply strict controls over their children.

"They don't know the other lifestyles so that's why they are against them and afraid of them. When you go to a bar or disco you dance or have a good laugh with your friends. They never been to such places which makes them scared" (Hear Our Voice)

Fathers are the authority figures in Kurdish and Turkish families. The authority also obliges the father to protect the family from any outside influences which are perceived to be threatening to the young and hence the vulnerable:

"They are influenced by their bad friends. To be able to protect more I follow them. A couple of weeks ago I caught my daughter that she was not going to the first lessons of the day. In spite of my previous warnings she was with one of her 'not so good' friends. I told her I would change her school. She said she was not going to do that again. I let her this time but still I follow her and watch if she does what she says she does."(Father)

Many fathers feel that their authority figure had been damaged by the schools or other social services. They can not control their children as they used to do in Turkey.

“Here their education system has no discipline, as we know it. They behave however they like in school. They talk with chewing gum in their mouth, cigarette in their hand. I don’t think their education system is strict at all. They are left on their own. When you are giving freedom you should also teach them discipline. But they don’t do that here. Teenagers think, there is freedom here, my parents can not touch me, I am too old to do things on my own. They teach each other that law on their side. Parents can not touch them.”(Father)

Since their children learn the laws of this country, they use these insights against their fathers to get more ‘freedom’.

“...parents believe that after destroying parental authority, the state has been unable to successfully replicate it, and has therefore left a vacuum, resulting in some children being out of control.”(Family Survival Strategies)

Kurdish and Turkish fathers lose control and they might end up becoming more offensive in some cases. They need to develop new strategies to protect and control their children. Since they have already access to the services problem on many other vital areas they have neither time nor resources to develop this strategy. Young generation’s attitude towards their fathers sometimes understanding but with a limit as it is in this case:

“My father used to say, ‘My father beat me up when I was a child. Also I was a shepherd once’. It is perfectly all right with me what he did and what was done to him. However with all respect he should not try to impose same things on us. I believe new generations are always one step forward than older generations.” (Hear Our Voice)

When they get into their late teens and twenties, clashes in the families usually become inevitable. Although traditionally neither the boy nor the girl leaves the house before they get married, this tradition changes when the family has moved abroad. Many teenagers and young people get married young rather than stay in school simply to move out of the family home and have separate lives.

Another reason for early marriages could be to secure their own future since their fathers’ status, whether granted refugee status or indefinite stay visa, is not clear. The children therefore try to find their own solutions. Again, once more the perception is that the father can not protect his children adequately and secure their future.

“After the refusal (asylum application) everybody got into depressive mood. I think my both children chose non-Turkish partners to get married in order to stay here.”(Father)

Guides and Teachers

Again in Turkey, in their environment, fathers were seen as the knowledgeable ones, guiding their families. Here, however, there is a complete reversal of the roles. Children are able to develop their English language skills much faster in local schools than their parents who work mostly in places where Turkish is the main means of communication. One consequence of this situation is that children become the guides of the families in GP surgeries and in other services by acting as interpreters between authorities and their parents. This puts a lot of undue pressure on children. On the other hand, on many occasions, when children realise the power somehow thrust in their hands, they can start using this against their families.

“I know that we should always be in contact with the school, My wife sometimes comes here, but I am not available most of the time. As my wife cannot speak English my kids can easily deceive her by interpreting wrongly about what has been happening at school.” (Parenting Video)

The balance of power has shifted completely towards children since they hold the key to access the outside world.

“The first generation does not know either the language or system. Since children know at least the language they need their children to overcome the problems. This change whole balance of power in traditional families. In my family my father seemed to me as a strong, able and problem solver man. I don't think children here feel same thing for their father. In some cases even children become more powerful than their parents since they can speak the language.”(Worker)

Another father's biggest regret is not being able to teach when they need it. There is a strong will there, but unfortunately they do not know how to use available services which most of them there within grasp of their reach.

“I wish I continued my adult education that I started when I came here. I wish had a better understanding of the education system and the society in this country and then I would have been more useful for my children.” (Father)

Problem Solvers- Mediators

The language barrier does not only impede access to services. Apart from many other effects in the long term, lack of English and reliance on translating intermediaries leads to increased passivity towards the day to day problems, leading to the loss of ability to cope with and solve issues.

“Language language language! That’s why we cannot help our children. We do not know how to help. When there is an interpreter available they can’t translate everything I want to say. But when I go to see the teacher or headmaster on my own, I can only understand few words that have been said. I sometimes ask my friend to come with me. But again they cannot still interpret exactly all my concerns.”
(Parenting Video)

Another major problem was fathers in particular weren’t available whenever they were needed.

However being absent in terms of Kurdish and Turkish fathers is different. In British society as a general it is known as:

‘Absent fathers’, as they are so often called (but not here – we prefer the term ‘non-resident fathers’ since many of these men are far from absent), have had a particularly bad press. The general impression given is that they are not willing to pay for their children, and aren’t particularly keen to see them.(Carlton)

Kurdish and Turkish fathers rarely leave home in the above sense. They carry out their duties as economic providers in most cases. However fathers are not there for possibly other and non-material needs of their children.

“In workshops we facilitated with young people and one of the main issue was their parent were not there for them. They are absent. When these young people needed to talk about something or ask advice, their parents are not the first to think because they are never there.” (Worker)

Managers

It has been indicated that fathers have tended to lose power in the family as guides and teachers. Increasingly, let alone organising their children’s life, their only role is reduced to that of the dispenser of discipline.

“(Talking about a neighbour’s son) Everyday trouble at school, he gets suspension all the time, he does not want to study, and he is only 11 years old. I know them and I often visit them. But you know why this is happening. Because the father is not informed about what has been happening, the mother does not tell anything to the father and she does not go to school to ask anything. The son comes home very late, she tells him to go quickly the bed before his dad gets back.” (Parenting Video)

Frequency of unemployment or insecure casual work, especially in the textile sector, changes their work patterns continually. When the work was available, they ended up working long hours, often doing heavy overtime and unsociable night shifts. Those who arrived in the early 1980s :

“It is a common mistake in our society that we neglected our wives and children by being too busy with working. We got into a sort of race with each other on how much work we did or how much money we earned and investment we made. When we looked back, we saw that we couldn’t buy what we lost with that money. When I realised that mistake I made a 180° turn.” (Father)

They did not have a routine and therefore tended to lose rhythms and patterns of life. Men left the management of the family matters to the wife, believing that their foremost duty was to look after the family’s economic well being and future.

“My husband does not work at the moment. He wakes up in the morning, has his breakfast and goes out. He does not realise what this house’ needs are. He leaves all the responsibility to me, even when he works 100% of the responsibility of the household is on my shoulder. He gives the wages to me and I have do all the shopping, pay all the bills etc. myself. He does not care if the money is enough or not.”(Parenting Video)

Transmitters of culture and values

Although mostly fathers are not there to pass the culture and traditional values of the communities and regions they left behind, because of their work commitments, (unsociable hours or in case of the unemployed whiling away time in cafes until late at night), they are nonetheless very concerned with the loss of the cultural values.

“I have seen other parents who ran after money all the time and lost their children eventually. They’ve got money. They’ve got indefinite visas. But have they got children now? No, their children were left on their own and what happened? The children left home and become strangers to their own parents.”(Father)

In order to protect the identity and cultural values they either apply strict regulations towards children or in some cases persuade them to go to community centres.

“Our children go to schools and get the British culture from schools. They come home and live in our own cultural way. They struggle between the cultures. Normally they adapt British culture. On the other hand as a person who grew up in Turkey I have different values, culture, traditions. When I go to Turkey to visit the relatives if they see my children are not behaving in our standards they will blame me as a father not the children. So they should learn our own culture and traditions too.” (Father)

After-text to the discussion

In our research we are not try to portrait just poor and critical side of fatherhood in particular Kurdish and Turkish fatherhood. There are many positive sides they have like all other fathers with different backgrounds. We think that it is necessary to approach with a critical point of view to make the targets clear therefore we can provide some suggestions towards solutions.

In this section we will balance the critical point of view by stating some general points about fathering universally. And we will give some examples as positive strategies Kurdish and Turkish fathers develop in their struggle to balance their life in a complete new and challenging environment.

There are many other factors in fathering as well as the sociological factors.

“...whereas pregnancy helps women adjust to their impending motherhood, fathers have little biological preparation. From infancy, girls are socialised for caregiving; fathers are socialised for providing. In addition, once the, baby arrives, mothers often have numerous social supports to help them adjust to their roles, whereas society provides few supports for fathers.” (Fatherhood)

One of the questions we asked to our interviewees was; *“Does involvement requires proximity? Do you have to be there to provide parenting?”*

It is a misconception that when the fathers away at working they are not doing their parenting obligations. Like in other refugee communities the reason to move a complete New World to provide secure future for their new generations as well as personal safety. Usually Kurdish and Turkish men come to UK to seek asylum when they prepare the environment for their families they bring their families here. That is also where one of the problems lies. In most cases this preparation time takes too long and their agony and suffering cause long term psychological problems. Also it affects their parenting skills in long term we believe.

“Whenever I phoned to Turkey my children kept asking that when I was bringing them here. This was quite a pressure at time both on me and on kids. Once I managed to bring them up to Belgium but things went bad and they had to go back. Eventually I managed to bring them here after 4 years. At the airport my youngest daughter whom I did not see since her birth looked at me ‘my real dad is here, I thought my uncle was my dad’. Initially they were all shocked. We had some adaptation problems.”
(A Father)

Another explanation to the question above the long hours fathers/parents feel they have to work. In order to provide better life standards in wherever they are.

“...for many men, especially in working class, working hard to provide their families is the primary way they express interest in their children’s lives. Thus we must be cautious about the preaching secular doctrine that equal involvement from mothers and the fathers is always best. Still, we should acknowledge that substantially unequal levels of participation in child care early on may contribute to challenging development differences between mothers and fathers overtime.”(Fatherhood)

Against all odds still some parents find the positive way ahead by being brave enough to change the way they used to be.

“It is a common mistake in our society that we neglected our wives and children by being too busy with working. We got into a sort of race with each other on how much work we did or how much money we earned and investment we made. When we looked back, we saw that we couldn’t buy what we lost with that money. When I realised that mistake I made a 180° turn.” (Parenting Video)

“Young people have different interests and hobbies. We should go out with them time to time and experience the rights and the wrongs together. We have taboos. We

think some places are bad. For instant I have never been to any bars or discos. But I am sure in two years time I will be going these places first time with my children and I will see what sort of places they are.” (Parenting Video)

Issues surrounding the Kurdish and Turkish Fathers

This report concludes that on the base of findings in Hackney, main problems which Kurdish and Turkish Fathers encounters in their daily life are:

- Language barrier
- Lack of knowledge and info about the education system and school
- Lack of knowledge and info about the health and social services in general
- Not knowing their rights
- Not knowing what services are available, including leisure and entertainment facilities for children
- Isolation
- Lack of recognition and support for needs of parents father in particular
- Lack of a constructive and supportive relationship with schools
- Financial difficulties
- Unknown, insecure future in this country
- Separation from the rest of the family for a long time during asylum application process and adaptation problems when the family is reunited.

Working with Refugees and Ethnic Minorities

Parenting/fathering work in ethnic minority communities is, like other specific subjects, very delicate area in terms of balancing between “patronising attitude” and “overlooking”. To get the approach right the projects should involve organisations which deal with the different needs of the communities (such as health advocacy services and some community centres).

In the evaluation of the YMCA's 'Parenting Teenagers' Initiative, which was undertaken between 1997-2000, working with ethnic communities analysed:

"It is, of course, regrettable that more ethnic minority parents were not attracted to the projects. It is unclear why this is; some project workers described the location of their organisation as in a 'very white' area, thus making the recruitment of ethnic minority parents difficult. A few workers commented on the difficulty they had in making their flyers or advertising materials sound and appear sufficiently attractive to parents from ethnic minorities. One described it as '...a very fine line, wanting to be inclusive but not making it look inappropriate for the majority'. A number of project workers also commented that the image of the YMCA is not one that is necessarily welcoming to parents from ethnic minorities, being associated with a Christian perspective."

The ethnic minorities mentioned here Black and Asian Community members who have rather established life in UK considering they came here 30-40 years ago. Nevertheless they have still their problems attending to the meetings because of the reasons above but also their agenda in parenting may differ as it happens in Kurdish and Turkish Parenting–Fathering. There are several issues in general ethnic minority communities and white communities. Especially when the minority community consists of recent refugee people like Kurdish and Turkish Refugees the urgent agenda and the concerns are changing as mentioned in previous sections. Also communities need the organisations which are coming from the work within the communities to build up a trust and working partnership. Therefore however, organisations such as YMCA, try with good intentions they can't reach especially to the recently arrived communities. They need more partnership and greater understanding the needs of the communities.

In 'Family Survival Strategies' by Moyenda Black Families Talking, among the "Issues for the Future" the following statement is asking promotion of Black family survival strategies, through group discussions, workshops, and cultural/religious events.

"These events can act as collective reassessment programmes, and can be further relayed to others by recording and dissemination of the discussion outcomes. Such community led programmes can be more effective than research projects geared to notions of changes in public policy as the key signifier for changed individual and group behaviour. The community project approach is also in keeping with the ethos of visual minorities who are committed to a process of self-help initiatives."

By emphasizing the importance of the 'community project approach', the study overlaps with our own findings even though black communities are early settlers into the UK compared with Kurdish and Turkish Communities.

Recommendations

There are no immediate solutions for the problems of Kurdish and Turkish Fathers. However some practical steps could be taken to ease current tension and pressure on them. Therefore we will recommend short term and long term approaches. At the end of this section we will also recommend some more research on some issues.

Short-term recommendations:

- These are based on practical projects, which will help Kurdish and Turkish fathers in order to find ways to solve their problems.
- Series of informative public meetings in community centres and health centres. In these meetings information will be provided on urgent subjects. Such as schools and social services. Meetings will be two sided and participants will find opportunity to talk about their problems. Meetings will be well publicised through local press and other meanings such as Turkish Radio Station.
- More leaflets and brochures will be printed about parenting and fathering.
- Different ways would be found to reach fathers where they are. Like a street theatre performing a play about parenting could be funded which will perform in café's and factories. This idea based on the success of the health promotion awarded "Tiryaki Kukla" (Puppet the Addict) project. It was a play about dangers of smoking and performed in café's, community centres to raise the awareness.
- Seminars and workshops about parenting and fathering would be provided for Turkish and Kurdish professionals working in the community centres, schools and social services.
- Couple, child and family counselling. Problems with children and family matters further put a lot of strain on fathers who are already suffering from many other problems like isolation, economical hardship, insecure future, adaptation problems after family reunion ... Counselling would help to those who cannot cope on their own.

Long term recommendations:

- To co-ordinate all parenting activities in Kurdish and Turkish Communities through one place. Therefore each activity will be publicised to more people and activities would become more efficient.
- With participating schools and community centres, fathering/parenting workshops could be arranged with specifically developed culturally appropriate facilitation packages. In ten weekly meetings could be interactive and informative. Therefore they can bring out their problems as well as solutions and they could be informed with guest speakers on certain subjects.
- In order to increase participation unemployed attendants would be paid for travel and lunch expenditure. For working fathers weekends would be better time for such workshops.
- Innovative projects would be funded through different schemes. (such as New Deal Trust in Shoreditch, SRB, Sure Start etc.) These projects could be wide range of short term activities; father-son outings to cultural and entertaining spots, picnic or sport activities.
- Male parenting workers would increase father's participation in such activities. Most of the parenting workers are women in the community. This situation strengthens the view that parenting is a women's job. Encouraging employment if the male parenting workers in relevant services would attract more fathers to such activities.
- "FILL THE GAP" PILOT PROJECT: In 4 schools/community organisations 20 fathers who have teenage children will be chosen. They will be taught English with focus on parenting skills for one year. Throughout the year their parenting skills would be monitored and turn into a report.
- This report had explored some of the issues in Kurdish and Turkish communities. However with its' limited time and resources some other issues might be explored and research more. These issues are:

- More in-depth research on all points in this report
- To find out the impact of the social background difference on fathering in UK among Kurdish and Turkish communities. In our research we have the inputs of the Kurdish, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot fathers who live in Hackney. However we need more information on families with different cultural and traditional backgrounds. One such sub-group is traditionally more religious section of the community, which attend mosques and participates in the activities of the mosques.
- We have not come across any “Physical Punishment of Children” case among our interviews. This is however far from a true reflection of the situation in communities. It is an issue, which is kept as a “family matter” like domestic violence. Therefore there is a need for further work and research on

Conclusions

The structure of the family radically changed since Kurdish and Turkish families moved to UK. Most of the damage being done to the position of fatherhood on this changing process. Fathers lost some of their power and confidence besides many other traditional powers they owned when they were in Turkey. They are cautious about the services, which offer help on fathering and parenting issues. Our research shows that when the right approach is taken they are open to new ideas, new discussions. However since their confidence has been damaged to system and to themselves they need more from such services to build up trust and sincerity between them and services.

Any fathering work should take a holistic approach. Initially to build up trust and later to address all other surrounding issues. It is difficult to address fathering alone if you do not inform them on; educational matters, asylum procedures, social services, leisure activities and their rights as the citizens or future citizens of this country.

There are many other issues, widely known in British society, becoming an issue in Kurdish and Turkish communities too. Like separated families, and fathers role in separated families, mixed marriages, step parents, step children etc....These issues might be known in British society for sometime but with the specific cultural and traditional background of Kurdish and Turkish families these issues are taking a new form. Therefore problems are getting more complex.

In most cases Kurdish and Turkish fathers are seen as a part of the problem by the services. They wouldn't come and feel easy to the places where they are blamed but not being offered enough help. Fathers should be part of the solution. Lack of fathers in families could harm growing children and family as a whole. Also isolated father who stripped of its responsibilities would have more difficulty to reform himself and change for good. Positive approach to fathers would encourage them to own their role in their families.

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Appendix**QUESTIONS FOR THE NEEDS OF K/T FATHERS**

Age:

Ethnic Origin:

Legal Status:

Marital Status:

Employment:

Education:

Number of children, and their age:

Why is it important to be father? (In relation with being a breadwinner, husband, head of the family and your situation at your job)

What is the most difficult thing to be a father?

In your opinion, what is the “good father”?

How your relations with your own parents affected your relations with your children?

Do you think it is important to prepare for fatherhood? How would/did you do that?

Do you compare yourself with other fathers?

Do you have role model in fathering?

In what way your role might have been different if you were in Turkey?

How often do you go to your children’s school to talk to teachers and when was the last time you did that?

How much time do you spend at home?

How much time do you spend with your children at home or outside?

In your opinion is physical affection towards your child necessary? Why?

When was the last time you hug your child?

What is your biggest regret about the way your children growing? (If there is...)

TRUTH or FALSE? DISCUSS

. more involvement better?

. involvement requires proximity? (you have to be there)

. involvement can be observed and counted?

. patterns of involvement should look the same regardless of culture, subculture and social class?

. women are more involved than man? (Do you think mothers should spend more time with children? Why?)

Have you used any service for support with family issues? (prompt with examples like counsellor, GP, health visitor, advice centre etc.)

Are you aware of any other service or facility you and your children can use together? If so which facilities and how often do you go to those places?

Do you need support in fathering/parenting? If so which of the following do you prefer and why?

- informative father courses

- development course