



# DAUGHTERS & DADS

Active & Empowered



The Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered programme (DADs) is an 11-week programme helping primary school-aged daughters and their dads (or father-figures) get active together.

Each 90-minute session aims to increase physical activity levels, Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) and social-emotional wellbeing of girls by improving the girls' physical confidence and competence, challenging stereotypes about playing sport and physical activity and increase fathers' confidence and ability to act as role models in relation to their daughter's participation.

## MEET THE ERICSONS

The Ericson family heard about the Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered programme from their local school in London. Mum, Stephanie, heard about it first and was eager for her husband and two daughters, ages 6 and 11, to take part. Dad, Mark, was excited and attended a consultation event about the project. Thanks to the feedback from Mark and other dads, the programme was scheduled for a time and place that they could attend despite busy work schedules.



**THE ERICSON FAMILY LIKES BEING ACTIVE TOGETHER, BUT THEY DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.**

Stephanie does karate with both girls weekly, and the girls also do dance and other after-school activities. On holidays, the whole family go swimming and walking together. But during the working day, Mark struggles to find time to be active with his daughters. He regularly moves to new job sites, so his commute varies. He also works long hours.



**THE FAMILY ALSO TOLD US THAT THEY STRUGGLE TO FIND AFFORDABLE ACTIVITIES NEAR THEIR HOUSE.**

While most programmes required a bus journey, **AS THE FAMILY DOESN'T HAVE A CAR,** the DADs programme was taking place only a few minutes' walk away. This made it much easier for them to take part.



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## OFF TO THEIR FIRST DADS SESSION

On the first day, Mark rushed home and had just minutes to help Olive, 6, and Emily, 11, get ready and out the door. While Stephanie got some much-needed me-time, they headed off to their first DADs session.

No one knew quite what to expect, but Mark, Emily and Olive were soon put at ease by the coaches running the session. Mark spent the start of the session with the other dads talking about how to support and empower his daughters. While he felt he already knew a fair amount about raising confident girls, Mark still gained a lot of additional advice.

The thing Mark remembered most was how to praise girls without referring to their appearance.

**“HAVING GIRLS - NOT TO ADDRESS THEM AS SWEETIE, BEAUTY, PRINCESS - TO TRY TO USE DIFFERENT WORDS THAT WILL MAKE THEM THINK RATHER DIFFERENTLY.”**

After each session, he shared the information with Stephanie. She told us how helpful the information was: “We do bring the girls up for them to be confident and resilient and happy with what they do, but still it’s nice to hear that from someone else as well to empower them even more.”

Meanwhile, the girls were having their own fun talking with a female coach about what it means to be resilient, confident, empowered (the focus word changes every week). Olive was particularly enthusiastic about these sessions: “It was FUN! It was kind of like warming up your brain. I loved doing everything.”



Finally it was time to get active! Mark and the girls spent time doing rough and tumble activities, aimed at breaking down the stereotype that girls are weak or fragile.

They then headed outside to the field to work on throwing, catching, running and jumping with the coaches.



**EMILY RECALLED LEARNING HOW TO USE HER FINGERTIPS TO DRIBBLE A BASKETBALL, A SKILL SHE’S NOW USING IN HER PE LESSONS.**

They definitely got a workout each week. As Mark said: “[DADs] was really good fun, I loved it. We all came back dirty and tired, but really happy and always smiling.”

Stephanie was even more effusive: “They were teasing each other. They were so happy to joke around. It was lovely. I loved it, because for many, many years it was just me with the girls and my husband always stuck with work. So it was so nice for them to do something together.”

Both Mark and Emily told us that they really enjoyed both the thinking and activity part of the sessions.

As Emily said, “It was physical activity and lessons about confidence and things like that, all in one. It was nice to combine the two. Not only did it get your brain working, you also got your body working.”

## THE IMPACT

DADs helped the Ericsons spend active time together, but it had a bigger impact on them as well. Stephanie and Mark agreed that the family was generally happier during the weeks when DADs was taking place.

It also offered Mark and his daughters the chance to spend quality time together in a different environment. As Mark told us,



**“IT WAS DIFFERENT FOR [MY DAUGHTERS] TO SEE DAD DOING DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, IN A DIFFERENT MOOD, IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT, AND SAME WITH THEM. I KNOW I SEE THEM RUNNING AROUND, BUT THIS TIME I WAS RUNNING WITH THEM - OR AFTER THEM, OR THEM AFTER ME!”**

Emily agreed, saying her relationship with her dad was already strong but got even stronger. Olive summed up what she learned about her dad in just one sentence: “I learned that Daddy can run faster than I thought he could.” Being active with his daughters also gave Mark a chance to model positive behaviours such as resilience and commitment. Even when he knew he would be aching the next day, he made sure they all went to the session together.

Mark also learned more about his daughters during the DADs sessions: “I was surprised to see that they were so active, that they do have flexibility, they do have that - I didn't think they did.”

Even outside of the sessions, Stephanie could see the impact the programme was having on Mark and their daughters:



**I LOVED THE TOGETHERNESS FOR THEM. IT WAS GREAT FUN FOR THEM. THEY WERE CLOSE ANYWAY, BUT IT BROUGHT THEM CLOSER BECAUSE OF THE FUN THEY HAD. THEY COULD TALK ABOUT SOMETHING, THEY COULD SEE EACH OTHER IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT, LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER AND THEIR ABILITIES.”**

While the girls continue to do activities at school and outside of school, Mark still struggles to have enough time to plan activities with his daughters during the week. Mark knows what to do: “[From DADs,] I've learned that you can create a game out of nothing, even lying down in the sun on the beach you can still create a game out of stones and sticks. You don't really need to organise, you don't need that much.” However, they'd love to have another programme like DADs nearby that they could do on a regular basis.

## SUMMARY OF IMPACT:

- There was significant improvement in the **family's wellbeing** and the quality of the time they spent together.
- Dad became a more prominent **role model** for physical activity - his daughters saw his abilities and capabilities for the first time.
- Dad and his daughters developed a closer **bond and connection**.
- The training reinforced the importance of raising **confident young girls** and how it can be achieved.
- The girls identified **transferable learning** from the programme (sport specific skills - FMS) into everyday life - e.g. basketball skills into PE lessons.

