

Dads' Club – sensory garden

Kingsway Children's Centre in Goole set up a Dads' Club, and families and staff have planned and planted a sensory garden together, which is now being used for a variety of activities involving children and parents.

The Dads' Club meets weekly in a local venue. This is usually during the early evening, so that members can socialise with other male carers and their children. The children's centre dads' worker attends to support the group and has helped them agree their rules and write a constitution.

The club has been set up so that fathers can give each other support, and feel more confident and comfortable getting involved in caring for their children and helping them learn.

The new sensory garden contains plants that stimulate the senses and are safe for children, including herbs and flowers such as lavender, chives, narcissus and musk mallow. It was researched and planned by Dads' Club members, who like to set up practical projects. They feel this tempts more people to get actively involved and helps attract new members.

Setting up the sensory garden

Dads' Club members gathered information about plants and began to plan the garden, with one club member taking the lead. The Dads' Club can be certain that the plants are safe and suitable for children because they took expert advice from Mires Beck, a local nursery. This is also a teaching centre, which helps people with physical disabilities to learn about gardening.



“It gave me the idea to plant flowers at home, with my children.”



The Dads' Club decided to hold an Open Day and barbeque, so that everyone could plant the garden together. They invited their own families, other local families who use the centre and staff members. This was a great success, and everyone had a wonderful day communicating and bonding through learning in the community they work in. Several new members joined the Dads' Club as a result.

Supporting learning – now and in the future

Now that the sensory garden is planted, dads and children are maintaining it together, and beginning to grow vegetables in tubs as well.

The garden is used for other parent-and-child sessions in the centre, such as Stay and Play. It helps to support learning about many different topics, including spring, growth, exercise and healthy eating. The skills, knowledge and experience that parents and children gain can also be used at home – for example, some families have taken spare seeds to start growing vegetables.

The sensory garden also makes the centre a friendlier and more inviting place to attend, which is important to those who use it and everyone who lives in the community around it.

The Dads' Club is planning new projects, especially now that it has more members. These include renting a nearby allotment and keeping chickens.

“We had a great time, digging, planting and having fun in the sensory garden.”



“I enjoyed planting the flowers with my son, and both of us getting our hands dirty, and having the opportunity to spend time with other families in the community.”

