

**British fathers of young children reveal they lean on their friends more for support – yet nearly half are missing social connection in lockdown**

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way fathers interact with their friends, and even altered how they view these relationships.

New research from leading men’s health charity Movember found dads are struggling without normal social interaction.

A survey of British fathers aged 18-75 found nearly half (47%) miss seeing their friends in person, with those in the 45-54 age bracket missing their mates the most.

Research also revealed fathers living with their young children lean on their friends far more for support.

A fifth (22%) of fathers with dependent children under 18 living at home haven’t contacted their friends during the COVID-19 pandemic but admit that they would have benefitted from talking to them if they’d done so. This drops to approximately 1 in 8 (12%) with those who do not have children under 18 living at home.

The forced distance COVID-19 has brought with it has shown a number of British dads just how vital their support network of friends is.

Over a third (35%) of fathers are now realising meeting up and spending time with friends is important for their mental health, as more than a quarter (27%) also say despite downloading apps to stay in contact, they don’t feel able to confide in their mates as they would in person.

And despite a number of guys findings new ways to stay in touch - average fathers are in contact with their close friends every three days - they’re still lacking when it comes to important conversations.

Only 16% have shared advice on mental health and just 12% share tips on parenting and how to cope with their children.

Dr Zac Seidler, Clinical Psychologist and Director of Mental Health Training at Movember, said: “Movember knows that alongside things like job loss and retirement, becoming a new dad is a real pressure point in a man’s life.

“There’s suddenly additional financial pressure, exercise can take a back seat, you can’t see your friends as much – on top of looking after a new baby.

“Men don’t talk about these struggles as openly as women, and that needs to change.”

During the pandemic 22% of British dads say communicating with friends has helped their mental health, which is why Movember is encouraging men to reach out

The charity has launched *Movember Conversations*, a new easy-to-use interactive online tool, which offers practical guidance on how to start a difficult conversation and support someone who is struggling.

Based on R U OK?’s ALEC conversation framework (Ask, Listen, Encourage action, Check in) and guided by an international team of mental health experts, *Movember Conversations* is a free interactive digital tool that presents a number of scenarios relevant to today’s world including job loss, social isolation and family pressures. It uses simulated conversations to explore and practise how anyone might navigate a difficult conversation with someone they care about.

Dr Seidler added: “We know it’s important to have conversations to support others; however, confidence and knowledge around how to do this with men is low.

“What’s making things even harder for fathers right now are the challenges thrown up by COVID-19, and its consequences of physical distancing, job loss, financial stress and strain on relationships.

“The *Movember Conversations* tool is there to encourage people to have conversations with men they care about who might be going through a tough time and give them the practical skills to do that.”

Previous Movember research released for Mental Health Awareness Week found eight out of 10 (83 per cent) of British men find it helpful when people ask if they’re having a difficult time - yet nearly half (46 per cent) said no one had checked to find out how they were coping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Father’s Day, Movember wants to encourage everyone to reach out to the dads in their lives and use *Movember Conversations* to help with navigating those more difficult discussions.

Movember Conversations can found at **conversations.movember.com**

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**About Movember**

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men’s health on a global scale, focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects around the world.

In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives.

The charity’s vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men’s health. To donate or learn more, please visit Movember.com.