

Boys and their Toys – Executive Summary

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The Boys and their Toys project was proposed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and accepted by the Digital Health & Care Institute as an Experience Lab. The Lab took place in June 2015.

The Experience Lab aimed to co-create scenarios in which digital interventions could be used as motivation to increase the level of physical activity for dads, as a means of reducing the risk of developing type-2 diabetes. We looked at how the daily life of the men taking part had changed when they became a dad, how these changes possibly influenced their level of physical activity, and what would motivate them to become more active.

The Lab provided a safe and creative environment through which the Lab team helped participants (“experienced dads”) to feel comfortable to share stories, reflect on their lives and explore their motivations. The information gathered was then used to co-create possible scenarios for ways in which digital interventions could motivate the participants to enjoy an active everyday life.

A series of activities including a physical work out, fireplace story sharing, mapping and a co-creation session were designed to gain insights into what appropriate support for dads in maintaining an active lifestyle would look like.

The outputs from the Lab included audio, photos, videos and field notes which were analysed for emerging themes.

The Experience Lab showed that a key to maintaining an active lifestyle is balancing a man’s time as a dad and his personal time, which was described as very challenging by the participants. Whether you need to sleep, go to the pub, work in the garden or go for a run, it is that time for yourself that most men feel like they must give up once they become a dad. It became apparent that the activities participants engaged in during the Lab day served as a moment to reflect on the balance of their lives. More than the solutions co-created, the greatest value was gained from the activity of reflecting and identifying different stages in their lives with accompanying behavioural changes.

It should be noted that the Lab involved a small number of participants, but that the intimate setting allowed participants to feel comfortable to share experiences on an emotional level, which made it possible to gather the qualitative insights included in our report.