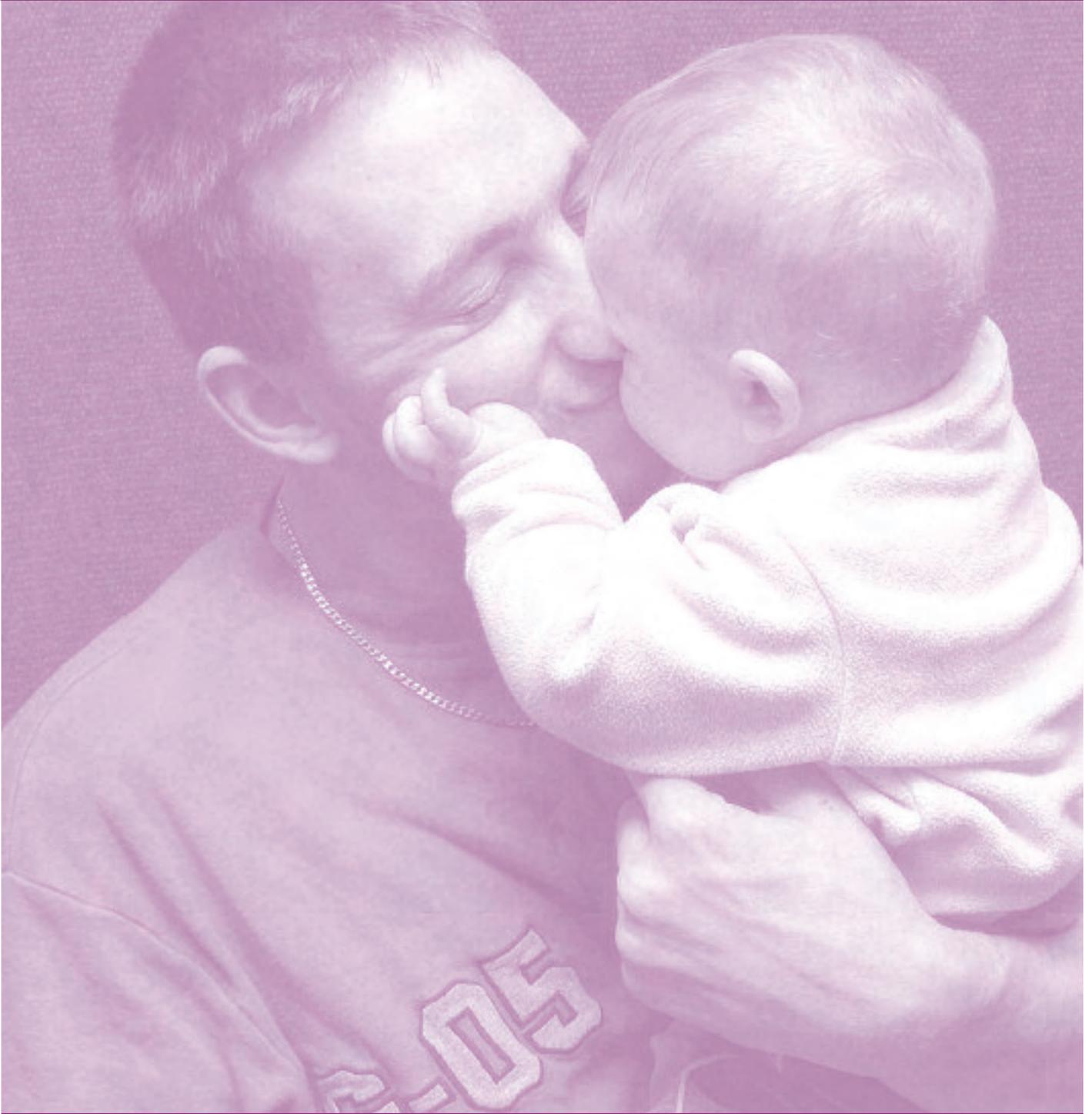


SECTION TWO - PROMISING PRACTICE



1 Getting started

PROMISING PRACTICE



In our research, we asked practitioners what they thought were the key issues or practice tips when setting-up and carrying out work with young fathers. With this knowledge, we hope that developing young fathers work may start at steps three or four, rather than beginning at step one.

Working with young fathers

Work with young fathers has particular challenges. Negative beliefs about young fathers, lack of funding, difficulties engaging young men, low confidence in working with young men, and cultural barriers are just some of the issues those working with young fathers face. Perhaps the most common concern reported by the projects and organisations we have spoken with is the lack of sustained funding for work with young fathers. The short-term and irregular nature of funding can lead to low staff morale and difficulty in long term planning especially in relation to partnership working. Setting-up support for young fathers can take a long time to get started and when it does, or is just about to, funding runs out and the work stops, often meaning valuable learning is lost.

But there is no need for doom and gloom. Some projects and agencies say

that with careful focused planning, starting young fathers work is not always as difficult as it first appears. The Health Initiatives Team at Education Leeds that works with school-age fathers, suggests that projects do not need vast amounts of money to start making headway; rather an understanding of young fathers needs, a commitment to the cause, the ability to be flexible and a willingness to challenge unhelpful professional attitudes towards young men.

Similarly, T-BAG in Halifax runs a mixed support group for young mothers and fathers aged 16-25 years. Provision is built upon already existing services, meaning costs are kept to a minimum as premises are already there and staff time is incorporated within existing job roles (see In Focus, p14).

B2b+ in Sunderland got started in their work with young fathers following the recognition that there were large and

'Young fathers work doesn't need to be anything special - it's just about recognising and understanding their needs – then addressing them.'

5. Throughout this guide we attempt to differentiate between specific young fathers projects, and agencies and organisations delivering (or wanting to promote appropriate) services for young fathers. Consequently, we use both sets of terms (i.e. project, and agency/organisation) to avoid overly simplistic suppositions about the kinds of young fathers work in question.

Key Questions

- Which young fathers are out there? What do you know about them?
- How will you identify and gain access to these young fathers?
- What services are you offering? Why would young fathers want to get involved?
- How will you assess (and then act upon) young fathers support needs?
- How will the work be funded, and for how long?
- How will you raise awareness of the project/service?
- How will success criteria be developed and measured? How will these be monitored and who will be responsible for this?



widening gaps in service provision for young fathers compared to young mothers. B2b+ realised that young fathers don't always want 'group' support. Instead, one-to-one support and outreach work was needed in the same way it was already available for young mothers. Grants received from Sure Start and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit meant extensive support work was already underway for young mothers in the region. Successful funding bids to the European Social Fund (ESF) and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) provided the financial basis for developing work with young fathers.

Manager of The Place, and the B2b+ project, Alison Horrox said that one of the most important learning points in working with young mothers and young fathers, is that 'one size does not fit all!' Moreover, she states that practitioners must routinely ask about a young man's parental status in the same way they already do with young women:

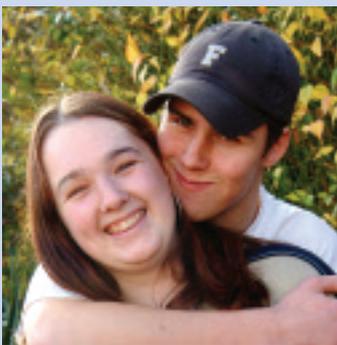
'They always ask a young woman if she's a mother, but not the young man - practitioners must start to routinely ask if he's a father... it's not difficult but it

means a whole lot in terms of support needs... many young men drop-out, or are kicked-out, of services because they don't attend, are tired or arrive late - but that's because they have been up all night with their child... practitioners must start to ask these simple questions so young men can access the support they need.'

Other promising practice in getting started involved 'getting services right' through consultation with young people and continual evaluation informing further work (see p23). Projects and agencies told us it was important to develop knowledge and understanding of cultural issues, to offer wide service provision (rather than just parenting programmes) and to build effective working relationships (networks) with other agencies. The people we interviewed emphasised perseverance:

'It's hard work - sometimes you end up sat there on your own - but it's about perseverance and making good connections with other agencies that will support you... it's a long process and can feel like you're banging your head against a wall.'

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Meeting young fathers needs

T-BAG (Teens-Babies Advice Group), Halifax - The Information Shop for Young people (part of the Connexions Centre in Halifax) has encouraged and supported a group of young parents (mums and dads) to get together to form their own support group. T-BAG is a support and advice group for young parents aged 16-25 years living in Calderdale. The group provides (peer) support and offer the chance to meet other young parents and make new friends in a

relaxed and child-friendly environment. There is a wide range of information available to young parents including advice on health, education and training, money and benefits, sexual health, housing, and jobs. The group meets every Friday 11-1.00pm, children are welcome and separate crèche facilities are provided. Young parents also take advantage of all the other support services on offer in the centre. Located within the town centre, the Information Shop is easy to access being supported by a local train station and regular bus services nearby.

Work with teenage fathers was developed by building on already existing work with young teenage mums who were accessing the Information Shop and wanted support that felt inclusive. Young fathers and male partners of the young mothers asked that they be included in such support. Because the group is based within the Connexions Centre, overheads and costs are minimal. T-BAG is steered by the young parents (mums and dads) themselves who meet once a month to

ensure the project remains relevant to the needs of its members. At the time of writing, approximately five teenage fathers and 6-7 teenage mothers attend the group regularly.

'It doesn't run off any money. We run it under the umbrella of the Information Shop. There's no expense. We've done a few fundraising events - a sale at Christmas with baby toys to generate some income for the hardship fund - but we don't need anything as far as premises, 'cos we've got premises. And staff - it's part of the staff's development to do such things - We have just received a grant - Children's Network Fund. They gave us £1,000 for the group, for expenses, developing the group, and going on trips and things.'

Contact: Olinda Olekeswycz (Project Manager) on Tel: +44(0)1422 330 033

Learning Points

- * To plan and deliver services effectively, it is important to find out about the local community; its geographies, its needs, its existing provisions. The Upfront Teenage Pregnancy Team in Bradford have conducted action research to identify gaps in provision for young fathers from Black and Minority Ethnic groups including those from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and African-Caribbean communities. The team are now using the findings to start filling these gaps in services for young BME fathers.
- * A number of projects and agencies told us it is important for workers to identify the kinds of locations and venues where young fathers can go with their children. Barrow Dads' Group in Cumbria says that identifying somewhere fathers can go with their children (other than fast-food places), is a valuable way to engage with fathers, and can help them to develop regular and positive contact with their children. Such sites should have good transport links and be areas that young fathers can feel comfortable in. These could include spaces that are already shared with other service users (e.g. young women), or be separate spaces held at different times and in different locations to services held for women.
- * Support for young fathers needs to be wider than just parenting programmes. Consider combining basic information, support, and advice (e.g. relating to health, housing, education, and employment etc.) alongside 'fatherhood work'. The UKdadsposse and the Potential Project in Oxford have successfully done this (see In Focus next page) with an emphasis on involving young fathers from African-Caribbean communities.
- * Getting started does not have to be financially demanding. However, gaining funding for starting or sustaining work with young fathers can be difficult. Fathers Plus in Newcastle tells us that to increase the chance of being successful in funding bids, projects and agencies should explain explicitly how their intended work relates to major policy outcomes, such as the five key outcomes in Every Child Matters. Even though sources of funding change frequently (and some such as the European Social Fund may only be available in specific regions or localities) possible options include:
 - Renewal and regeneration funding (e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and New Deal for Communities programmes)
 - Teenage pregnancy local implementation grant (paid to top-tier local authorities)
 - Local health authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCT)
 - European Social Fund
 - Children's Fund and Local Network Fund
 - Children, Young People and Families single grant scheme
 - Voluntary sector organisations in the children's and youth sector
 - Sure Starts/Children's Centres
 - Local Authority Children and Young People plans
 - Big Lottery Fund
 - Extended Schools and Healthy Schools Funds.

'Successful work with young fathers is not rocket science, it doesn't have to be "innovative", in fact it's often not innovative, its about listening to what they want.'

* TOP TIPS

Fathers Direct offer a free advice line (up to 15 minutes per call) and e-mail support for individuals trying to develop work with young fathers, or attempting to make their organisation or service father-inclusive.

**Contact by telephone:
0845 634 1328**

**or e-mail:
workershelpline@
fathersdirect.com**

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Meeting young fathers' needs

UKdadsposse and the Potential Project, Oxford - The UKdadsposse and the Potential Project are community projects jointly funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Oxford City Council. The programme provides support, training, and information to fathers, male carers, and young men and boys in school. The projects aim to provide a safe environment where young men can develop active participation in the nurturing and development of their children/families. They also aim to encourage the personal development of individuals, and to assist the creation of positive identities of young men as fathers. Services offered include:

- weekly drop in sessions, topic discussions informed by user participation
- personal support and advocacy, including help and advice on issues such as housing, legal advice, welfare rights,

educational support and signposting to other agencies

- personal development including parenting skills, anger management, communication and conflict resolution, first aid and health and safety in the home
- outreach work including visits to young fathers at home and family centres
- social events
- emotional and practical support to fathers/male carers and their families.

Contacts: Carlton Gabbidon (Project Manager), Tel: +44 (0)1865 779 298 or Christine Etheridge (Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, Oxfordshire), Tel: +44 (0)1865 226 816

Barrow Dads' Group, Barrow-in-Furness

Running since 2001 and aimed at fathers (and carers) of all ages (including teenage fathers), Barrow Dads' Group(s) works in five Wards of Barrow in rural Cumbria including Abbotsvale, Greengate, Hindpool, Ormsgill, and Walney. The various groups collectively aim to enable fathers to develop positive relationships with their children by spending valuable time with them through activities and outings. Currently, nearly 100 fathers, fathers-to-be, and carers regularly access the groups.

'...we started with £50, no dads turned up for 3 weeks – but then one did, and it all started from there.'

The five groups each within different local communities in Barrow, run on different days of the week helping to increase access for those who might not be able to make a particular day or time. Activities for fathers and their children are numerous including cooking, football, fishing, picnics, arts and crafts, camping, day trips, and parenting courses (such as Speakeasy and first aid).

By working in partnership with Social Services, local solicitors and local parents, Barrow Dads' Group are also able to offer the opportunity for estranged fathers to see their children within the group settings. Although estranged fathers are offered structured group activities, many prefer to spend one-to-one time with their child. There are currently 15 fathers accessing this service.

With funding from Barrow Sure Start, Barrow Dads' Group have recently set-up aqua-natal classes for fathers-to-be with their pregnant partners. Already existing for women only, the new classes are designed to help fathers-to-be bond with the mother and 'bump' and take place outside normal working hours (Wednesdays 7.30-9.30pm). Sessions are free and transport can be provided if required.

Contact: Dave Morrison (Community Support Manger) Tel: +44 (0)1229 871 480

'YOUNG FATHERS' WORK DOESN'T NEED TO COST A LOT OF MONEY, YOU JUST NEED TO BE A BIT THOUGHTFUL ABOUT IT ...'

2 Reaching and engaging young fathers

PROMISING PRACTICE



'IF YOU CAN ENGAGE YOUNG FATHERS-TO-BE BEFORE THEIR BABY'S BORN, YOU CAN SOW THE SEEDS, WHEREAS COMING IN LATER IS MUCH HARDER.'

Reaching and engaging young fathers is the 'bread and butter' of young fathers work. We asked a number of projects and organisations about the methods they had used that had worked and the ones that had not. We also asked what they had learned about engaging young fathers. Finally, we present some examples of promising practice in terms of reaching school-age and teenage fathers.

Accessing young fathers

Projects reported a wide range of methods to raise awareness of their work and reach and/or engage young fathers. To help promote their project, B2b+ in Sunderland use simple written material (e.g. leaflets and posters) with jargon-free language to account for the fact that some young men may have poor literacy skills. B2b+ works to ensure young fathers can engage with their services by offering drop-in sessions, providing a range of venues where courses take

place, offering group, outreach (e.g. home visits), telephone, one-to-one support, or a venue of the young dad's choice. Combined with inclusive 'men-friendly' policies (where the term 'young parents' has been replaced with 'young mothers' and 'young fathers'), B2b+ has enjoyed strong successes in reaching young fathers.

'You really need to get into the community and find out who the people are – the people who know people.'

During 2004-5, a total of 40 young fathers accessed support through the project. Other examples include the Great Yarmouth Young Men's Project

Key Questions

- * How many young fathers are there in your area?
- What specific needs do they have?
- Which young fathers do you want to reach?
- Who might be able to help you do this?
- What approaches or methods might help you reach and engage young fathers?
- How might these methods exclude some young men?



Reaching and Engaging Young Fathers

Learning Points

'At the start of a project offer bite-size projects or activities so that there isn't an expectation that the young dads have to commit forever.'

- * Building networks is essential – these can be formal (e.g. through local agencies) or more informal (e.g. meeting mothers picking their children up from school). Amongst others, projects and agencies in Bradford, Lewisham, Norwich, Halifax, Leeds, Rotherham, Brighton and Hove, Sunderland, and Hull all report that accessing young fathers through their female partners, has been a successful recruitment strategy.
- * Agencies are an important source of referral but care needs to be taken to ensure referrals are appropriate and fit with the services being offered. Practitioners need to be able to explain clearly what the benefits of the young fathers work are, and for whom (e.g. the young father, the child, or both?).
- * 'Word of mouth' is probably the best means of recruitment but relies on at least some young fathers having positive experiences and then passing on that information (Featherstone, no date). T-BAG in Halifax has relied on this almost exclusively as young parents pass on their experiences to others.
- * Material (flyers, booklets, posters, packs etc) should explain clearly what the benefits of the services being offered are for young fathers (and their children) i.e. why they might want to get involved. The Great Yarmouth Young Men's Project and the Mancroft Advice Project in Norwich have developed a comprehensive information pack for young fathers (the Norfolk Young Fathers Fact Pack). The pack details the support available and how to access it, and provides clear information and advice on a number of varied topics (e.g. legal, paternity tests, child-care, relationships, benefits etc).



(GYYMP), DVD in Rotherham, the Teenage Pregnancy Support Service (TPSS) in Hull, and Sure Start in rural Berwick-upon-Tweed where young fathers have been accessed through antenatal services. Routes include encouraging health visitors to ask about the involvement of the young father, gaining referrals through the young mother, or by young fathers workers being present at clinics to talk to any young fathers who attend appointments with the young mother.

DVD in Rotherham said they had been criticised by some agencies for offering sports and activities such as football, cricket, and rugby sessions as ways of engaging with young fathers:

'...we were challenged about why are you playing football – you should be showing 'em how to change nappies and make up a bottle and stuff like that.'

DVD argued that such activities were a vital tool to draw young fathers in and help them gain confidence and esteem, before starting parenting work:

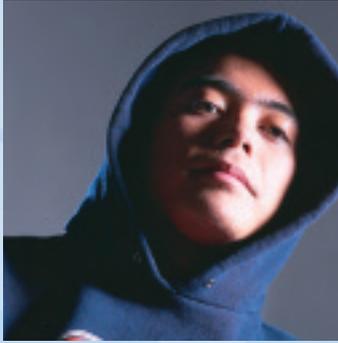
'A lot had no confidence, no self-esteem - engaging them with football got 'em to be part of a team, got them running about and talking to each other - for one day a week they felt good about themselves... we used football as a tool to draw the young dads in – after that, you can then ask them to do other more parenting stuff.'

Many projects told us that reaching and engaging young men nearly always takes longer than anticipated. They also said that although networking with other agencies is an essential source for referrals, it should not be relied upon. For instance, some agencies may not understand fully the nature of the fathers work provision (for example, making assumptions that it focuses exclusively on issues such as anger management). In some cases, the work may be viewed

with suspicion with presumptions that because it is pro-fathers, the work must be anti-mothers (Lloyd, 2001). Consequently, referrals from other agencies may be patchy in numbers or

inappropriate. For example, young men who were not fathers (or fathers-to-be) were frequently (and inappropriately) referred to DVD by some local agencies.

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Engaging BME Young Fathers

Upfront Teenage Pregnancy Team and Sure Start, Bradford

– Upfront are currently developing and delivering services for BME young fathers in Bradford based on research undertaken by a member of the team. Positive links with Sure Start Bradford (Manningham and West Bowling) means the team have developed considerable expertise in engaging with BME teenage fathers (particularly those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities). Following a series of interviews with team members and two interviews with the Sure Start young fathers workers (in West Bowling and Manningham) these learning points emerged.

What's gone well

- Understanding the sexual health needs of BME young men through research and consultation has been a useful route to developing services.
- Parenting programmes delivered by Sure Start young fathers workers are enjoyed by the young fathers and have led to many successes including helping fathers gain access to their children, gain employment, and improving relationships with their children.
- Creating a strong network of community contacts has been invaluable. A positive relationship with the Council of Mosques has been a huge ally in gaining access to young BME fathers who are Muslim.

Challenges

Territory – distinct territory boundaries in some communities mean some young men will not stray into each others areas.

Consequently, young fathers are unlikely to attend if services are not located within their specific territory - even if geographically, it is just next door.

Isolation - many of the youngest BME fathers do not want others to find out they are a parent, particularly if the relationship is outside of marriage. This is compounded by concerns that professionals will pass on their details to others in the community.

Perceptions - Sure Start settings are perceived as being primarily for women - meaning young men do not go or feel that the services are for them. Furthermore, some BME (young) men will not participate in mixed-gender activities such that if both partners (or someone of the opposite sex) turn up to an event, one or the other will leave.

Islamic perspectives - Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) rarely incorporates Islamic perspectives on sexual health issues (e.g. contraception, abortion etc). This can be difficult to address because there is no homogenous Islamic perspective. There are many Islamic perspectives and work needs to recognise the diversity of views.

Current challenges involve work with Asian teenage fathers of children of White teenage mothers. Upfront's sexual health outreach worker reports there have been real difficulties in accessing both the young parents together, particularly when the young parents own parents are not aware of, or do not condone the relationship.

Recommendations

'Workers need to have a sound knowledge and understanding of Islam and its many facets, it can really open doors.'

- The key to addressing cultural concerns regarding SRE programmes is often negotiation, for example, agreeing with parents on the most appropriate ways to depict sexual images.
- Young fathers workers need to engage with the local community figures. Extensive outreach into the community is vital for reaching and engaging BME young fathers. 'People who know people' are crucial, but it is important to remember that local

figures (irrespective of the community they come from) will inevitably have their own values or agendas. Workers need to be alert to how to make the most of such contacts without compromising the agency's position.

- Knowledge of culture sensitivities is important in understanding why young fathers don't access services. Many men may not want to discuss fathering issues openly for worries about perceptions of weakness, but also worries about people passing information on and others finding out. Developing knowledge of local cultures and communities is important in breaking down these barriers.
- Spaces where young fathers from specific religious and cultural groups can go and mix only with other men may be important in engaging some young men with support services.
- Building relationships and trust over time is essential. Workers must be patient and be willing to be available outside the 9-5 working day.
- Language skills are useful, though not essential. The ability to speak/understand Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, and English can help to engage with others significant to the BME young father (e.g. his own parents, grandparents etc). Moreover, as there are some faith and cultural concepts that are not easily translated into English, being able to offer a multi-lingual service will clearly enhance the quality of interaction between the worker and young father.

Contacts:

Upfront Teenage Pregnancy Team, Tel: +44 (0)1274 432 445
 Nicola Corrigan (Teenage Pregnancy Advisor)
 Claire Whiteley (Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator)
 Zed Shaffi (Sexual health outreach worker)

Sure Start

Ali Asgar (Dad's Involvement Worker and Family Support Worker, West Bowling), Tel: +44 (0)1274 201 493
 Rashed Hussain (Young Fathers Worker, Manningham), Tel: +44 (0)1274 323 603

Reaching teenage and (school-age) fathers

Accessing school-age fathers raises quite different challenges to accessing older young fathers. There is a considerable lack of understanding and research about teenage and/or school-age fathers. We know little about how many there might be, how many maintain close relationships or what forms their relationships might take.

'It's hard to identify young fathers because he's not carrying the belly - so engaging means it's often about him coming forward, and having someone in school that he can come forward to, such as mentors and designated teachers.'



Significant gaps remain in service provision for teenage and/or school-age fathers. In some ways this is not surprising given the complexities involved in working to strike a balance between child protection concerns and the young fathers' support needs. Moreover, (and as we noted in the introduction) few projects and agencies work specifically with fathers under 16 years, partly because of prevailing beliefs that such individuals can be so 'hard-to-reach'. For instance, school-age fathers may be less interested in attending organised sessions than their older counterparts. Given their youthfulness, teenage fathers are likely to be immature, and perhaps unable or unwilling to understand the nature and level of their responsibilities. They may also be less willing to be pinned down by time appointments (Mordaunt, 2005). Furthermore, young fathers who are at school may be wary about taking time off for appointments, preferring not to draw attention to their status.

Practitioners wishing to offer support for the youngest fathers mentioned a number of barriers they have faced. For example, the difficulty in finding

such fathers (their 'invisibility'), the lack of support mechanisms if such fathers are identified, complicated circumstances with the mother and her family, educational difficulties (sometimes including behavioural problems), and the attitudes of some staff (e.g. social workers and school employees). But some projects told us that not only can the work be done, it can be done well.

The Health Initiatives Team at Education Leeds work exclusively with school-age parents (and parents-to-be; mothers and fathers) and the teenage male partners of school-age mothers.

The team has developed considerable expertise in working with young parents of compulsory school-age (see In Focus, next page).

Other projects and services currently delivering support for teenage fathers (but not necessarily school-age fathers) include the Young Fathers Project in Lewisham, Brighton and Hove Young Fathers Project, B2b+ in Sunderland, T-BAG in Halifax, Fathers First in the Isle of Wight, UKdadsposse and the Potential Project in Oxford, and the TPSS in Hull. See *List of Contacts* on p60 for details.

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Working with School-Age Fathers

Health Initiatives Team, Leeds – The Health Initiatives Team’s at Education Leeds works city-wide with schools and other agencies to ensure that school-age parents (mothers and fathers) are able to access appropriate education, ensuring that educational achievement is not disadvantaged by pregnancy or parenthood. In 2004, the Team developed the post of Specialist Learning Mentor for Teenage Fatherhood with funding from Connexions, Sure Start (Plus), and Education Leeds. The role involves working with school-age fathers and the male teenage partners of school-age mothers to identify both the support needs of teenage fathers, and how agencies in Leeds can alter their practice to become more ‘young father-friendly’. Together with the Childcare Coordinator, the Mentor started running a weekly after school group (FACT; Fathers and Children Together), where school-age young fathers and fathers-to-be can come together for some mutual support and have access to an experienced childcare specialist.

FACT (Fathers And Children Together)

With 3 dedicated workers (one specialist learning mentor and two nursery nurses), FACT is based around social issues such as housing, health issues, and parenting. The group offers support through peers and brings in guest speakers from other agencies to offer specialist knowledge on a variety of topics (e.g. ranging from NHS speakers such as a teenage pregnancy midwife and sexual health worker, to the local council providing talks on car seat safety). For those in contact, young fathers are encouraged to bring along their babies as it is recognised as often being the only time they get to spend with their babies on a one-to-one basis without anyone interfering. For those who can’t bring their baby to the group, other fathers in the group

‘share’ their babies so all members can practice their parenting skills and join in the activities.

Occasional (low cost) day trips are offered (e.g. visits to the library, local parks, and to see Santa) and locations chosen deliberately to ensure that they are in very public places in order to both raise the profile of teenage fathers, increase the young father’s confidence about being a father in public, and challenge negative perceptions regarding parenting competence of young fathers. In 2003-4, approximately 14 school-age fathers accessed the service rising to 24 during 2005/6.

Learning Points:

‘Ticking boxes doesn’t work, because it doesn’t challenge the culture surrounding young fathers work ... you’ve got to be passionate about what you do and be able to challenge other professionals’ views...’

- The immediate impact of appointing a Specialist Learning Mentor for Teenage Fatherhood was that many young fathers and young fathers-to-be engaged with the support offered by Education Leeds much more than before, and felt able to be much more open about their support needs. Moreover, referrals from schools and other agencies have increased, and many young mothers have expressed keen interest in introducing their partner to the Specialist Learning Mentor.
- Experience has shown that work with young fathers does not need to cost a great deal of money. Large expensive celebration type events are unsustainable and do not lead to increased engagement. Guest speakers (e.g. for FACT, and SRE programmes in schools) are often willing to speak for free as part of their professional developmental role.
- Workers need to be comfortable in challenging attitudes and beliefs about school-age fathers. For example, why do you think he shouldn’t play a fathering role, why is he an undesirable influence on this child?
- Some specific learning from FACT has revealed that that running the group at the same time (directly after-school) and on the same day every week is important as it provides a sense of continuity and stability for young fathers who may have rather

chaotic lifestyles. Providing a father-friendly environment where the group is held (e.g. displaying photos of the young fathers and their babies themselves) is easy to create and helps young men feel that the service is for them.

- Although the after-school group FACT is essentially a pilot activity that is a part of the broader work of Education Leeds in terms of its contribution to the local Teenage Pregnancy partnership, it does provide a positive example of what a forward thinking agency and effective partnership can do.

Contacts: John May (Specialist Learning Mentor for Teenage Fatherhood) or Jenny Midwinter (Sexual Health Initiatives Coordinator), Tel: +44(0)113 395 1215

Ladz 2 Dadz, Northamptonshire

Funded by Northampton and Heartlands PCTs, the Ladz 2 Dadz project is an integrated element of the mainstream services offered by the Northamptonshire County Council’s Teenage Parent Support Team. The service for young fathers and young fathers-to-be was established in April 2006 and offers advice, support and positive encouragement to young fathers aged between 14-21 years (including those who may be ‘looked after’ in residential or foster care). The aim of the project is to help young fathers to meet their own, and their babies’/children’s basic physical, social and emotional needs.

Work is varied, individually tailored, and focuses on issues such as employment, education and training, parenting skills, legal/welfare rights, housing and benefits. The intensity of support and specific delivery methods are flexible and depend on the circumstances presented. Project workers meet the young man in a location of his choice, wherever he feels most comfortable. Access to the service is via a referral from anyone including the young father themselves who feel the service will enhance the opportunities available to the young father and/or their child. Since April 2006, 25 young men have accessed the service, three of whom are currently of compulsory school-age.

Contact: Heather Frick (Teenage Parents Support Team Manager), Tel: +44 (0)1933 231 050

‘... YOUNG FATHERS AT SCHOOL ARE SO INVISIBLE, IT’S REALLY DIFFICULT TO FIND OUT WHO THEY ARE.’

Reaching and Engaging Young Fathers



* TOP TIPS

- The lifestyles of some very young fathers and fathers-to-be of compulsory school-age, means having a dedicated worker with time to be flexible and re-schedule appointments can be helpful.
- During initial contact, allow the young father to choose the venue to help them feel safe. Fathers First in the Isle of Wight tell us that this is a particularly effective way of re-engaging the young father on subsequent occasions.
- Avoid going headfirst into parenting issues. For the youngest fathers, issues such as education, exclusion, housing, and money issues may well be more pressing. Fathers First and the TPSS in Hull say that non-parenting concerns (e.g. educational exclusion, relationship difficulties, and enquiries about employment and housing) are most often to the fore in their work with the youngest fathers.
- Look at how you can develop positive working relationships with local schools and networks (e.g. designated mentors, school nurses, Connexions Personal Advisors etc.). Such contacts can be an effective route to promote the services available to school-age fathers and school-age fathers-to-be. The Health Initiatives Team at Education Leeds receive nearly all their referrals of school-age fathers directly from contacts within the school system. However, other sources of referrals also include teenage pregnancy midwives and school-age mothers.

Learning Points

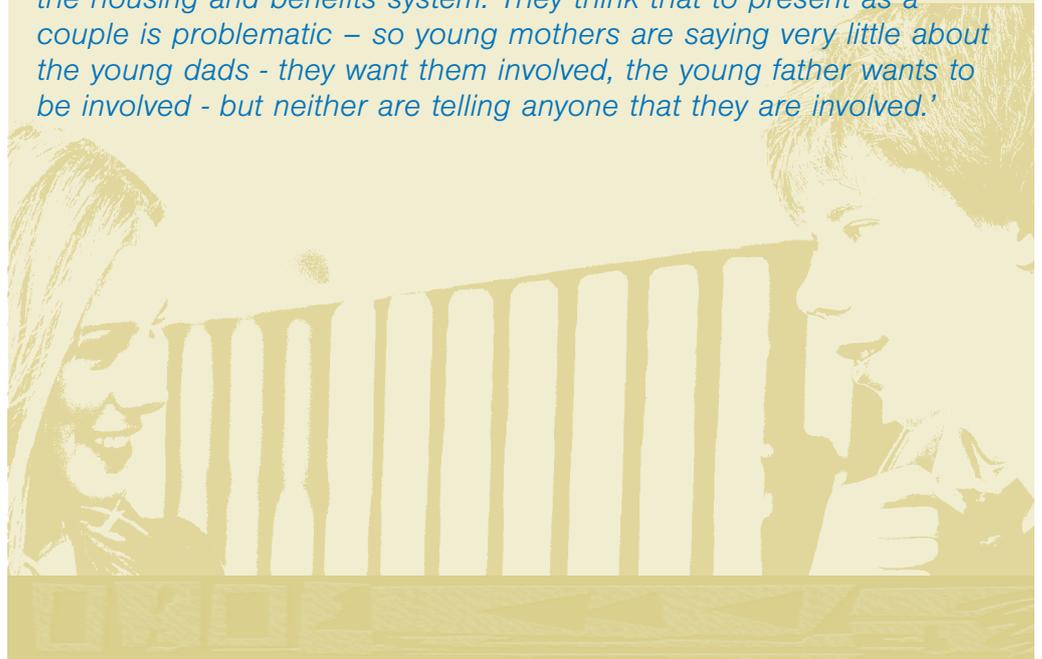
'School-age dads can be reached... it's taken a lot of work to challenge and give other professionals a helping hand up to understand that - we work hard to ensure health professionals reach young dads as well as the mums. Every bit of information for young dads is there... and they're really interested.'

- * Perhaps the largest barrier to engaging with school-age fathers is finding them in the first place. In school, acknowledging the young father often relies on him coming forward, whereas for the mother recognition and support are much more visible and explicit. It is important to explore how best the culture and ethos in schools can be influenced so that pupils who are parents-to-be (male or female) feel more able to come forward early to access the support that is available to them. In doing so, it is also important for such support (where available) to be rendered more 'visible' to both schools and pupils.
- * Evidence from work with school-age/teenage fathers shows the youngest fathers want to be involved in the care of their child, but their circumstances can conspire to exclude them:

'...often it's a case of the status of their relationship - they may have only been together a matter of weeks and not officially in a relationship - and that relationship isn't recognised by either family. So, very quickly the young man will be pushed out of the equation.'

- * It's not just the attitudes of many professionals that must be challenged about working with school-age and teenage fathers. The attitudes of young mothers and young fathers themselves also need to be challenged. Pilot research in Croydon and Lewisham (South London) by Working With Men (WWM) has revealed that many young fathers are much more involved with the young mother and their child than professionals believe:

'It's not only professionals' attitudes that are problematic here - we're talking about something much more complicated. We've got to point a finger at those young mothers and young fathers... as there are some attitudes here that need to be challenged in their perception of the housing and benefits system. They think that to present as a couple is problematic - so young mothers are saying very little about the young dads - they want them involved, the young father wants to be involved - but neither are telling anyone that they are involved.'



3 Being strategic

PROMISING PRACTICE



In this part we look at what projects and agencies told us are most important to delivering services that meet the needs of young fathers. Adopting a carefully planned approach is crucial. Poorly thought out, or 'bolt-on' approaches are unlikely to be effective. The issues raised here link in with a number of other topics covered in this guide such as recruitment, evaluation, working with other organisations, and so on. Here, we address just two particularly important aspects of working strategically: consulting young fathers, and developing integrated services.

Consulting young fathers: getting services right

Consultation (perhaps through interviews, discussion groups, or participation) with young fathers is an essential way to help build understanding of an issue and identify opportunities for further work. TSA's Young Fathers Project (Mordaunt, 2005) found that many young fathers tend not to respond readily to services that impose a particular content and/or style of delivery; rather projects need to *'identify the needs of their clients at the outset, and then regularly review them to improve and develop the service'*. In some ways, there is rather a

chicken-and-egg situation here: impose a style and content delivery first and then consult, or consult first and then develop services?

Our research tells us that either of these two ways of working can be effective. The most important factor to increase the chance of successful outcomes is that consultation does take place, and that practitioners work hard to consider how best they can meet the individual needs of young men.

'Avoid an unconscious bolt-on approach, it just doesn't work – you need dedicated provision for young fathers.'



KEY QUESTIONS

- Who will you consult with? Young fathers, young mothers, practitioners (which ones?), colleagues?
- What methods will you use in the consultation process?
- How might you develop a gender differentiated approach? What works with young mothers may not necessarily work with young fathers.



One particular example of promising practice comes from YMCA in Luton, which recently (June, 2006) ran a large-scale consultation event with African-Caribbean young fathers. The consultation intended to discover what support African-Caribbean young fathers needed before, during, and after pregnancy in order to shape the focus of future work. YMCA used a number of methods (including questionnaires and interviews) to find out about young fathers' experiences, including feelings about the medical aspects of pregnancy, the attitudes of the respective families (both fathers' and mothers'), and the levels of contact the fathers had with their children. Following the event, YMCA is exploring ways in which local projects can be funded to undertake the work.

The B2b+ project in Sunderland also views consultation as an integral part of deciding what services are offered to

young parents. Young fathers are asked what it is they need at every stage of the planning process, and future project plans are heavily influenced by these discussions. For example, some young fathers were interested in learning how to play constructively with their children. As a result the young fathers and nursery staff developed a 'Play with a Purpose' course that looked at child development and the importance of age appropriate toys and activities that are affordable for the parents.

A further example of promising practice regarding consultation comes from the Merton Teenage Pregnancy Partnership. Based in South London, the project innovatively used findings from their consultation to create a drama project designed to stimulate further discussion about improving support for young fathers (see In Focus).

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Research and Consultation through Drama

Merton Teenage Pregnancy Partnership

The Teenage Pregnancy Partnership recognised support for young fathers in Merton needed to be addressed urgently. Consequently, the partnership mapped services that worked directly with young fathers or who had young fathers in their client group. This led to the development of a piece of research carried out with young fathers (under 24 years with teenage partners) in order to identify their support needs.

A number of interviews were conducted with young fathers, and the findings given to Pro-Thinc Theatre Company to devise a short play based on the young fathers'

experiences. Young fathers in the area were then invited to attend a consultation event where the play was shown to stimulate discussion about their experiences and ways of improving support offered to them. The audience consisted of young fathers aged 24 and below, whose partners were under 20. Over 30 young fathers from Merton and Sutton also attended the event and expressed their experiences and views about being a young father in Merton.

The combined research and drama event revealed young fathers wanted a variety of support such as:

- advice, support and information on housing, employment and benefits, parenting skills, local services, relationships, child access issues, and confidence building
- provision of one-to-one support and a young fathers group
- somewhere locally to take the baby
- the same 'advantages' and support young mothers currently receive
- a fact sheet or newsletter for young fathers.

Learning Points

- The research and consultation event demonstrated that family networks are a

key source of support for young fathers in Sutton and Merton, and that young fathers currently gain little support from professionals.

- The consultation provided an essential evidence base on which to expand and develop support for young fathers in Merton.
- Since the event, an increasing number of young fathers have accessed the Teenage Parent support services.
- The research and consultation was successful in two ways: it helped professionals gain a greater understanding of the needs of young fathers, and led directly to the expansion of existing services. It also raised young fathers' awareness of the services available to them.
- Consulting through drama was particularly effective because it allowed young fathers to discuss their views and experiences through characters in a play. This allowed young men to express and contribute as much or as little as they wished in a safe and non-threatening way.

Contact: Kate Jezernik
(Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator),
Tel: +44 (0)208 687 4733

Learning Points



'Understanding cultural issues is essential when planning work – young Asian fathers tend not to access services... so you have to get your understanding of what's needed and what's already out there.'

- * Being strategic is vital in working with young fathers. Approaches need to be planned in advance and reviewed regularly if they are to be effective in providing sustained provision that meets the individual needs of young fathers.
- * Learning from TSA's Young Fathers Project (Mordaunt, 2005) tells us that practitioners intending to work with young fathers should determine from the outset their intended impacts, identifying the who, how and when, along with those responsible, success criteria, costs and the required staff, training, and support.
- * Planned work with young fathers must acknowledge the diverse needs of different BME groups. For example, the Upfront Team tell us that many Muslim young fathers in Bradford wish for Islamic perspectives to be taken into account, especially regarding sexual health issues (e.g. contraception). Upfront report that consulting and negotiation with influential community figures can be crucial to the success of work with BME young fathers.

* TOP TIP

- * Consider youth-work style approaches that take the young person's agenda as the starting point, rather than imposing a definition of what 'fathers work' entails at the outset.
- * Work with young people to maximise ownership: ask them what they want, again and again, and act on what they say.
- * Think carefully about venue and access: Drop-ins are particularly appealing to young people but should be located in a central community setting. The location should be 'young-father-friendly', have good transport links, and preferably under the same roof or nearby to a service that young people are already accessing for another service.

.....

'IT IS ABOUT LISTENING TO WHAT THEY WANT... IF SOMETHING DOESN'T WORK, DON'T FLOG IT TO DEATH!'

.....

Developing integrated approaches



As we argued in the introduction to this guide, mainstream services need to engage more fully with young fathers to ensure that they become ‘normal’ and legitimate clients, where the term ‘parent’ genuinely means both ‘mother’ and ‘father’. However, it is also important to recognise the complexity of what this means in terms of service provision. Young fathers don’t all have the same needs. For example, a father who does not have contact with his child, and is desperate to achieve this, is likely to have a very different agenda from someone living with their child and enjoying a positive relationship with the child’s mother.

Consequently, whilst the integration of support for young fathers into mainstream services is of course desirable, specialist services also have an important role in terms of meeting

the heterogeneous needs of young fathers. Lowe (2006) notes how with a small shift in attitudes and practice, including some young fathers in mainstream services is easily achievable, particularly for those who are already involved with their children and perhaps living with the child’s mother. More effort is required to include those fathers who are involved but are perhaps not living with the mother, and who are more ambivalent about services. Lowe (2006) asserts that the most complex group is where the relationship with the mother has broken down, especially if the young father is not in contact with the child. In such circumstances it is much harder for services that support young parents to discern their role with regard to the young father in these situations (unless there is a physical safety issue). This is where more specialist services have an important role in terms of focusing on the young fathers needs as a catalyst for building bridges towards his positive contact with the child.

Whilst there is a need for the development of more system-wide strategies and service provision that are young father inclusive, there also needs to be a mix of specialist services aimed at young fathers but that are still integrated within mainstream father-inclusive services. In terms of the former of these, Fathers Plus in the North East, tell us that being strategic is of fundamental importance in developing such approaches to work with young fathers. Roger Olley (Project Manager) suggests services need to conduct ‘whole system

‘EVERY WORKER IS A FATHERS WORKER!’

reviews’, whereby the team reflect upon the ways in which young fathers are treated from start to finish. Such ‘whole team, whole system’ considerations are likely to include examinations of areas such as administrative procedures, identification and measurement of success, underpinning principles (e.g. deficit models of fatherhood *vs.* more strength based models), evaluating modes of delivery and initial contact/referral/recruitment strategies, and so on. Such system reviews are time intensive, difficult and often involve ‘invisible work’. However, they are also essential if systemic changes in the way work with young fathers is carried out and perceived, are to occur.

B2b+ in Sunderland, which offers young father-inclusive strategies within their mainstream provision say that a seemingly small, but crucial step for them in developing a more integrated approach to work with young parents, was to interrogate the use of language within their written policies. By changing the word ‘parent’ to ‘mother’ and ‘father’, it makes more explicit the strategy areas that exclude young fathers.

The TPSS in Hull has developed integrated and mainstream services for teenage parents in such a way that the word ‘parent’ really does mean both mother and father (see In Focus).

‘Agencies hide behind the ‘parent’ word. Use of the ‘F’ word in policy and documentation - the “father” word - is absolutely crucial. It changes the whole timbre around teenage pregnancy strategies.’

Roger Olley Fathers Plus

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Integrated Working

Teenage Pregnancy Support Service (TPSS), Hull

The TPSS is a centrally based team comprised of a teenage pregnancy coordinator and four teenage pregnancy advisers with different specialisms (including school-age mums, pregnancy and child health, housing, and young fathers). The TPSS provides services for young fathers that are fully integrated into the mainstream support offered to teenage parents. The TPSS posts are now permanent (including the fathers worker post) and are funded through both the council and the PCT. Fathers work is totally integrated and a part of everyone’s role within the team.

‘Up until March 2006, the teenage pregnancy support service had Sure Start Plus funding, and funding for a young fathers post. This meant the team which was originally two advisers - as is common across the country, then became two advisers

plus a fathers worker. Later we also got a housing worker. So it became more of a service than the adviser model. We now have four advisers who specialise in different areas but who all work with the young fathers... we’re now funded jointly by the PCT and the Council which means the whole service is mainstreamed.’

The TPSS team have developed strong partnership links with local schools, health services and housing providers. Support is offered on a one-to-one basis via a drop-in service once a week. During this time a number of services are provided for at least some of the day including support with a TPSS adviser, (including the fathers worker), health visitor, midwife and the provision of sexual health information and free condoms. During 2005-6, approximately 399 young people were supported. 324 were female (pregnant or a teen mother) and 75 were male (father or father-to-be). Of the 75 young men, 56 were a father-to-be at the point of accessing the service. Of the 399 total, 257 young people were aged 17 years or under.

Learning Points:

‘One of the reasons we have been successful is because young fathers work isn’t just seen as fathers work, it was seen as work with men generally... fatherhood issues are built into everything we do, rather than being a discrete element.’

- Being located within council offices helped the TPSS develop its services and draw upon mainstream funding. This allowed the young fathers worker post to become permanent, and the inclusive focus on fathers within the team become a stable part of their mainstream service provision for teenage parents.
- The TPSS’s work with teenage fathers is primarily through one-to-one support. This is because experience has demonstrated that most young fathers have complex individual needs which cannot be addressed through ‘traditional’ fathers’ groups.
- Providing housing and benefits support constitutes a large part of the TPSS’s provision for young mothers and young fathers, and is often the foremost reason young men access the services. However, once young men have accessed the service, the TPSS then try to engage them in other areas e.g. support around preparing to be a father.

‘Young people are really desperate to have support around housing needs and benefits in the first instance - we are not saying that’s how it always is, but it’s often the first point of call.’

Contact: Rob Elkin (Young Fathers Worker) or Susan Reddington (Service Manager), Tel: +44 (0)1482 336 380



* TOP TIP *

Developed by Fathers Direct, the **Fatherhood Quality Mark (FQM)** is a new government-backed initiative designed to help services meet the requirements of the Children's National Service Framework (NSF). The Children's NSF requires primary care trusts, local authorities, and children's services to provide targeted information to all fathers and to gain skills, through training, to work with fathers. The FQM is awarded to services meeting these new standards.

The FQM can help service providers for (young) fathers, to be more strategic in their work by assisting them in fulfilling statutory responsibilities, implementing key government guidelines (e.g. Engaging Fathers guidelines, DfES, 2004), improving services, and achieving recognition of quality. The FQM system also validates what services are already doing (if appropriate), and helps services to plan and develop more effective strategies for the future, which are then externally assessed.

The FQM works in three strategic stages with full support from Fathers Direct who work alongside and offer information, mentoring, and staff training at all stages:

1. Review - Examination of existing policies and procedures
2. Development - Plan and implement an effective strategy for change
3. Validation - External assessment and validation of services

**Contact: David Bartlett
(Services Manager)
Tel: +44 (0)1422 847 825
www.fathersdirect.com**

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Working Together

Lewisham Teenage Pregnancy 'Virtual' Team, and the Lewisham Young Fathers Project – The Lewisham 'virtual' team in South London operates as a multi-agency initiative working to provide holistic support packages for teenagers parents-to-be (mums and dads). The team consists of a core group with other professionals being involved from time to time:

- a development officer and young parents support worker
- two teenage pregnancy midwives
- an education re-integration officer
- a Connexions Personal Advisor (PA) and an education admissions and monitoring officer
- a young fathers worker
- a Patchwork (supported housing organisation) floating support worker
- a social worker (advice for team intervention support for young people)
- a National Childminding Association (NCMA) representative for young parents 16+ in need of childcare.

Each organisation accommodates and pays for their own member of staff. The 'virtual' team has developed joint policies, protocols and a referral form for use across agencies. When a teenager is referred to the team, one staff member will carry out a needs assessment and then refer to the most appropriate team member to deal with the most pressing issue. A package of support is then developed so the young person's identified needs

A further example of integrated practice comes from the Teenage Pregnancy 'Virtual' Team based in Lewisham, South London. Working with Men (WWM) directly line-manages the team's young fathers worker. In this way, both the team and WWM can benefit from shared learning and experience (see in Focus).

can be addressed. The team meets twice a month to review cases and to discuss core business. Work carried out with teenage parents is inputted into one shared database. This facilitates information exchange within the team and data collection for a clearer picture of the needs of teenage parents in Lewisham.

Young Fathers Worker

The Lewisham Young Fathers Project was created to help local young fathers acknowledge the importance of being a dad, and to develop self-confidence as young men and as fathers. As part of the 'virtual' team, the Young Fathers Worker aims to provide young men with a broad package of advice and support as required. This support includes mediation work with families, sex and relationship education, parenting skills, and other advice as required by individuals to help improve the outcomes with their children. Most young fathers who currently access the project are aged 16-18 although four are over 25 years because they have teenage partners. In the previous year 50 young fathers have been referred to the project by other agencies or self-referrals, of which 30 are presently active cases.

Learning Points:

- Dissemination of promising practice and learning across professional groups is a highly effective means of capitalising on the range of skills and experiences within the 'virtual' team.
- Regular meetings help the team continually reflect and evaluate working practices.
- Strong outreach work including youth clubs, hostels, and mother and baby units are essential routes to successfully engaging with young fathers.
- Integration and joint working with other services in the Lewisham area (e.g. Sure Start and Connexions) has been a particularly effective way of promoting, and meeting the needs young fathers in the South London area.

Contact: Owen Thomas (Young Fathers Worker), Tel: +44 (0)207 237 5353

4 Examples of PROMISING PRACTICE young fathers work

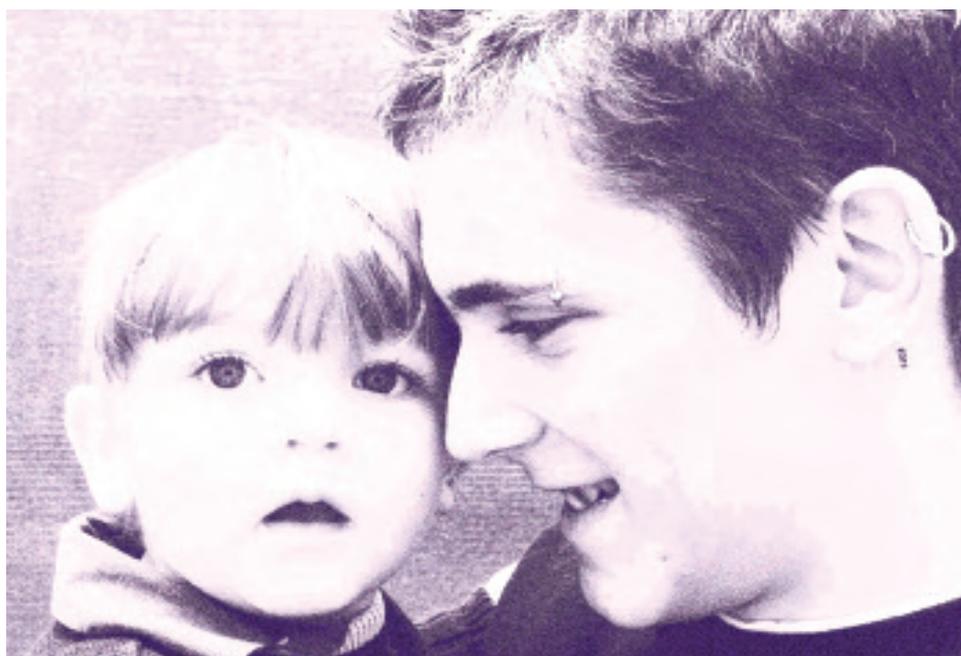
Talking about young fathers work can appear abstract unless we shed light on exactly what it involves. In our research it became clear that there is little information detailing what young fathers work actually is. In this section we present some examples of the kinds of activities organisations do in their work with young fathers.

Service delivery

Young fathers work is wide-ranging often involving a variety of delivery methods including one-to-one, group work, fixed-term programmes, peer support, and more mixed approaches that may combine elements of each. The specific activities that constitute young fathers work depends on a number of factors such as the specific aims and focus of the work, funding stipulations, the needs and diversity of young fathers, and the method or style of service delivery adopted.

One-to-one work

A number of practitioners we spoke to used one-to-one approaches with young fathers. This would sometimes include building on the skills and strengths of the young men through conversation and dialogue before moving on to other methods of service delivery e.g. informal group sessions and peer support. For example, the Specialist Learning Mentor for Teenage Fatherhood located within the Health Initiatives Team at Education Leeds, initially works with school-age fathers on a one-to-one basis, before moving to involvement in a weekly group session once presenting problems have been dealt with. In other cases one-to-one work is the main basis of service delivery. For example, the TPSS in Hull, and Fathers



First in the Isle of Wight use exclusively individual approaches with the young fathers they work with.

One-to-one support often involves working with presenting issues identified by the young father as their most pressing concerns. It is therefore normally led by the agendas of the young men and may involve visiting them in their homes, meeting on 'neutral' ground or meeting in specifically designated locations (e.g. project offices). Individual needs are established and work involves helping the young father to achieve their separate objectives. Practical advice relating to housing, benefits, education, employment, and legal issues may be offered initially before leading to more emotional support and fatherhood work. See In Focus (next page) for some examples of one-to-one work.

'He (the project worker) keeps in touch between appointments to see how I am doing, that's just good service. It's nice to be thought of.'

Young father, London

Examples of Young Fathers Work

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Examples of One-to-One Work

The Life Planning Game – Devised by Base 25, this tool is particularly useful to help young fathers understand their current situations, past histories, and identify plans for the future. It uses a board game format as the structure for weekly individual sessions (although it can also be used with couples and in group settings), allowing the young person to work through the issues that are important to them. Full details are available from ContinYou (2005a).

Fathers First, Isle of Wight – Run in partnership with the Youth Service, local midwives, and the Connexions Service, Fathers First is connected with the Mobile Youth Initiative (MYI) which runs in isolated rural areas of the Isle of Wight. The MYI realised they were not reaching young fathers in rural areas and therefore set-up plans to deliver a parenting group for young fathers through the mobile bus. The bus is a fully equipped mobile youth centre that visits isolated areas of the

island and is available for young people aged 13-19 years. However, through a consultation process with agencies and young people, it was realised that teenage fathers wanted one-to-one intensive support rather than group based work. Consequently, holistic, flexible, and intensive individual support is now provided for around 36 young fathers meeting them in an environment of their choice, or wherever they feel safe and comfortable.

'We meet young fathers wherever they feel safe or comfortable, it might be in their own home, at a park, whatever suits them - we travel to them.'

One-to-one support is totally needs led, starting from the young fathers agenda. In the first instance, support usually relates to non-parenting issues (e.g. housing, employment, substance misuse, relationships, learning difficulties, legal issues etc.) but will move on to parenting support when the presenting issues have been dealt with. Support is wide-ranging and extensive; however, some specific examples include:

- Initial assessment and identification of support needs through discussion and dialogue. This discussion is built into a written contract that stipulates the issues that are to be worked on, which the young father then signs his agreement to.
- All one-to-one sessions are recorded and reviewed. This has two purposes: 1) to protect the young father and staff member, and 2) to provide a record of work and progress that can be reviewed by the staff

and young person to identify 'distance travelled', and identify new targets.

- Development of positive parenting skills – This may involve discussions (e.g. relating to babies' developmental stages, and the importance of interaction and contact), paper-based activities (e.g. using handouts giving basic information on health and safety, or hygiene), and practical hands-on activities (e.g. making baby food or visiting local shops to explore different kinds of baby foods and nappies).
- Building of confidence and esteem – This occurs through the support process rather than specific activities or work per se. Confidence and esteem are built through developing trust and positive working relationships with the young father.
- Learning and employment support – This may involve support with filling in job applications, writing CVs, providing ideas on where and how to look for jobs (e.g. with a visit to the job centre), practicing interview skills, and so on.

'Individual support is totally led by the young father, we make sure he knows he will not be judged and that we are there for them – we look at the individual holistically and let them know that they can use our support for any area of their lives, not just parenting.'

Contact: Dee Makin (Senior Youth and Community Worker),
Tel: +44 (0)1983 856 640

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Examples of Group Work

Sure Start, Berwick-upon-Tweed - The Sure Start Borough outreach team is co-located at Wooler Fire Station but also operates out of a number of satellite venues across the borough. Jan Marshall (midwife) runs ante-natal classes for (young) fathers-to-be in rural Northumberland. Sessions are held in the evening to accommodate working hours, and held at the local maternity department. Personal invitations to fathers-to-be are given during ante-natal home visits to engage fathers early in the process. The group is needs led and starts by asking the fathers what they want from the sessions.

A number of specific activities designed to stimulate discussion and learning about pregnancy and fatherhood include:

- creating a 'things to do list' ready for the birth and afterwards
- ice breaking activities (e.g. sharing due dates, proposed names of babies, hopes about being a father etc.)
- providing handouts on specific advice for expecting fathers (e.g. what to bring to the birth, ways of supporting his partner etc.)
- providing lists of useful websites and contact details
- information handouts on pregnancy and breast feeding
- exercises on 'hopes' and 'fears' about fatherhood
- practical activities on money, respective parenting roles, sexual issues, and social needs
- discussion of feelings about pregnancy and fatherhood
- information on child development such as what babies can and can't do.

Contact: Jan Marshall (Midwife),
Tel: +44 (0)1668 283 372

Hartcliffe and Withywood Teenage Parents Project (TPP), Bristol

- The TPP operate with young parents and young parents-to-be in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Bristol. The project is open five days-a-week and work with young fathers is supported by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. Young fathers aged 13-25 years are able to attend, and the aim of the group is to help develop meaningful relationships between father and child. Group work and activities include:

- music production sessions
- breakfast sessions where young fathers are introduced to a variety of professionals such as health visitors, dental nurses, and drug workers
- baby massage
- first aid sessions
- basic literacy skills
- food and Hygiene certificate
- residential workshops to build confidence (including mountain biking, camping, building shelters, and cooking)
- support with housing issues.

Contact: Mark Newman
(Fathers Development Worker)
Tel: +44 (0)117 978 4401

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Examples of Peer Support

DeVeloPping Dads (DVD), Rotherham – The DVD project aimed to encourage young fathers (16-25 years) to play a greater role in the lives of their children by raising their awareness of the crucial part they can play in their child's upbringing. DVD's worker Nigel Rose delivered preventative sexual health work during SRE lessons in local schools, with young fathers providing peer support to pupils:

'We took our young dads into schools and delivered peer support – we talked about the experience of what it is like for them to be young dads, and talk about being at the birth and things like that. It was a good chance for pupils to see the realities of being a young dad and ask questions.'

Contact: David Sargent (Chief Executive, Chantry YMCA), Tel: +44 (0)1709 720 040

Health Initiatives Team, Leeds – The Health Initiatives Team at Education Leeds has recently received a Teenage Pregnancy Implementation Grant to help set-up a peer education project. The team has recruited a group of volunteers from the many young parents that the Specialist Learning Mentors have supported over the past few years. These volunteers all became young mother or young fathers whilst at school and now want to give other young people in Leeds a chance to learn about the realities of teenage parenthood. The volunteers are currently taking part in a six week training programme, designed to equip them with the skills and confidence to go into schools to talk to pupils about their experiences and about how teenage parenthood has shaped their lives. From September 2006, schools will be offered the opportunity to enrich their Year 9 PSHE curriculum by inviting the peer educators into class as part of an appropriately planned programme.

Contact: Jenny Midwinter
(Sexual Health Initiatives Coordinator),
Tel: +44(0)113 395 1215

Barrow Dads' Group, Barrow-in-Furness – Working in five Wards of Barrow in Cumbria, Barrow Dads' Group(s) aim to enable fathers to develop positive relationships with their children. Fathers who live locally run all the groups, with many group members also helping out as volunteers (some of whom have gone on to complete training and now work for Sure Start).

Contact: Dave Morrison (Community Support Manager), Tel: +44 (0)1229 871 480

* TOP TIP

* **Young People and Peer Support: How to set up a peer support programme by Marilyn McGowan, TSA.**

This manual by Marilyn McGowan gives practical advice and guidance on how to set up a peer support programme. Although not aimed specifically at young fathers, it describes how to set up a support infrastructure, allocate roles and responsibilities, recruit and train young people, promote the scheme, and evaluate progress. With a specific focus on the school context, the manual may be particularly suitable for those wanting to set-up peer support through Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) programmes.

The manual is available from TSA publications www.tsa.uk.com/publications

Group work

Group work with young fathers can offer the chance for young men to meet other young fathers, work on parenting skills, share experiences, develop confidence, explore fatherhood issues and so on. As we discuss in the next section, a number of projects and organisations successfully use group based approaches to deliver support for young fathers. Group work can be an extremely useful and cost effective tool (see In Focus on opposite page) but it is important to recognise its limitations as well.

Peer support

Many projects and organisations encourage young fathers to provide help and support to their peers in appropriate and responsible ways. This approach often develops from group work and can strengthen the

services offered. Peer support varies in levels of formality from a casual conversation to more dedicated help where supporters are formally trained to assist their peers. Peer support can have a number of advantages to the young father offering the support, the young father receiving the help, and the project or organisation itself. For example, young people are often in a position to elicit rich insights from their peers who may feel more relaxed and open talking to them than they might talking to professionals. Peer support can also create opportunities for young people to develop confidence and a range of new skills, whilst also helping to ensure that services are accessible and 'young-father friendly'. However, it is important to remember that peer support does have cost implications as supporters require training, support, and supervision themselves.

Examples of Young Fathers Work

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Example of a Fixed-Term Programme

A Dad's Point of View, Taunton

Somerset's Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator initiated a young fathers art project that took place with a number of young fathers across rural Somerset. The work was part of a South West arts project that focussed on young fathers, and had two main aims:

1) to raise the self-esteem of young fathers, and to counter negative stereotypes about young fathers and parenting, and;

2) to raise awareness of the needs of young fathers among the general public.

Over the course of six months, young fathers were encouraged to use photography as a medium to explore their experiences of fatherhood. Young fathers were taught basic photographic techniques and lent digital cameras to capture images of their lives and relationships with their children. They also had their photograph taken with their children and the work was collated into a published booklet. The booklet has since been widely disseminated with the photographs being exhibited at the South West 'DADS' exhibition in Bristol (2004), and framed copies are on display in local maternity units. The photographs have also been made into an interactive DVD where viewers can click on the photographs to hear the young fathers talking about their experiences.

Contact: Julie Husband (Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, Somerset),
Tel: +44 (0)1823 357 988

Fixed-term programmes

'Fixed-term' programmes are usually developed to deal with very specific aspects of fatherhood and personal development, and may be time-related i.e. a pre-determined number of sessions or time period. For example, as part of the South West Arts Project focussing on young fathers, 'A dad's point of view' used photography to explore young men's experiences of fatherhood and produce a booklet to highlight their thoughts, feelings and experiences on what it means to be a father (see In Focus).

Mixed approaches

Mixed approaches to young fathers work encompassing a variety of delivery methods such as one-to-one, group, peer support etc, are likely to be more effective and reach more young fathers than singular approaches.

In practice, although some projects and agencies delivering services adopt singular approaches to their work with young fathers, the majority take up at least some elements of mixed working e.g. the Young Fathers Project in Milton Keynes, M.A.P in Norwich, Base 25 in Wolverhampton, Lewisham Young Fathers Project, B2b+ in Sunderland, and UKdadsposse and the Potential Project in Oxford (the next section provides some examples).