

Following Young Fathers

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Introduction

- Baseline study 2010-12 (www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk)
- ESRC funded FF follow up study (Nov 2012-Sept 2015)
- Lack of knowledge regarding experiences and support needs of young fathers
- 4 strands of work

Strands 1-2: Research design

- **QL methods**
- Addresses *how* and *why* questions; aims to understand *what matters* to people as a precursor to understanding *what works* in policy terms
- **Knowledge to action approach**
- Progress from knowledge transfer, to knowledge exchange to joint knowledge production

Strand 3: Mapping of provision

- Range of services in existence
- Support is needed and valued by young fathers
- Provision continues to be fragmented and difficult to find
- Young fathers perceive services to be aimed primarily at young mothers

Strand 4: Early Start evaluation

- A Universal Services Review in 2010-12 led to the development of Early Start- a new way of delivering services to under 5s in Leeds
- Focus on birth to five, principles of early intervention utilising the already existing services of health visiting and children's centres
- FF is tracking these developments as they unfold

Sample information

- 30 fathers (16-24 years old)
- Different recruitment routes
- Varied circumstances and backgrounds
- Different stages of fatherhood (pre-birth- 6 years)
- Varied contact with children
- 2-3 waves of interviews and activities

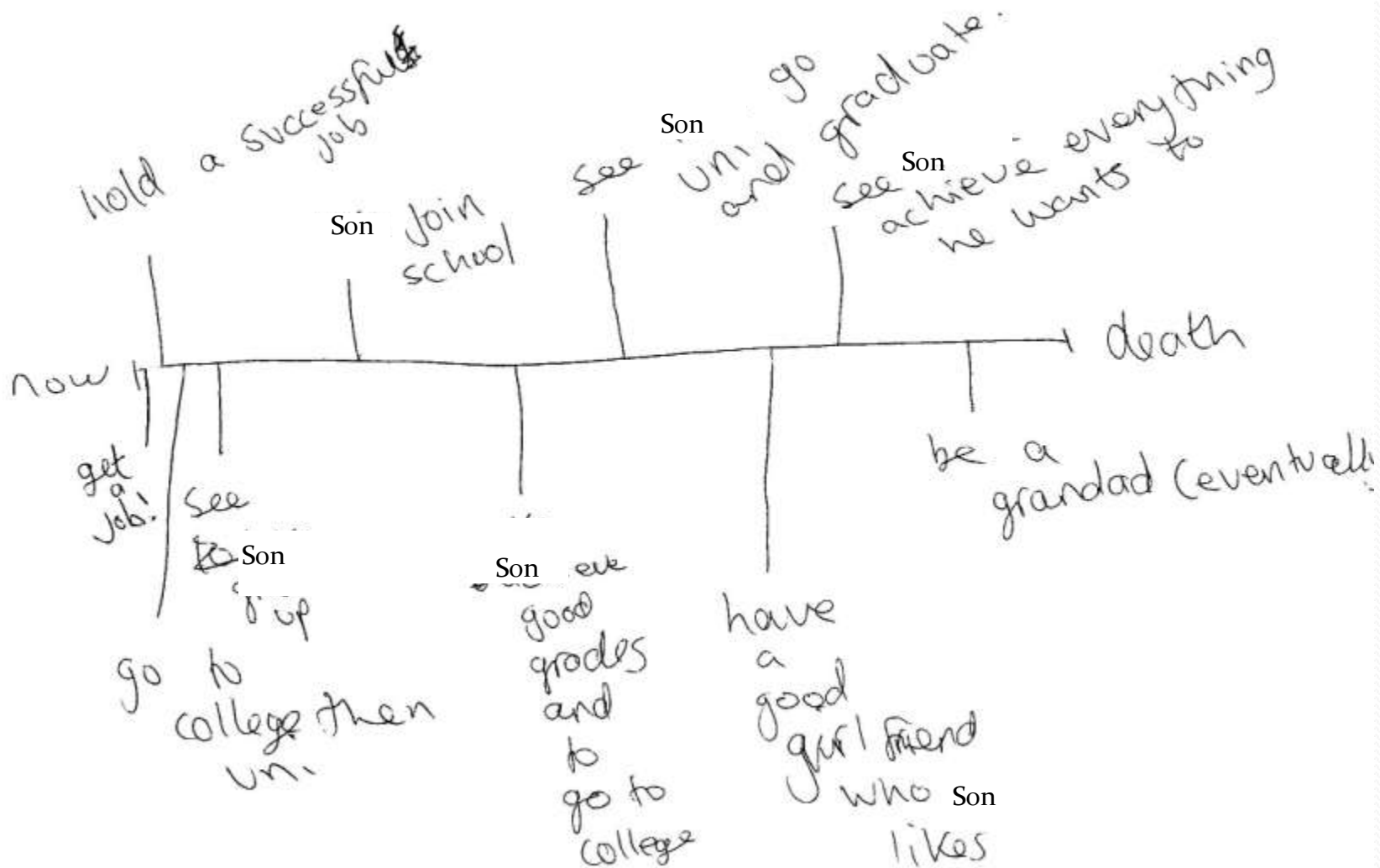
Findings to date

- Pre-pregnancy experiences/ abortion
- Becoming a parent – birth and beyond
- Fatherhood in practice (opportunities and challenges)
- Significant others
- Future aspirations
- SRE
- Professional support

Becoming a father

- Mixed reactions
- Adjustment period
- Turning point in life
- New opportunities
- Aspirations for the future
- Unplanned does not mean unwanted

“I want to be the person who [my son] can turn to. And who, obviously, who is always gonna be there for him. ... You know, when I’ve got him, and when he does something, when’s he’s growing up, you know, its the happiest emotion cause you just wanna give him a kiss and a cuddle. He’s my little man ... He’s so - you feel really proud. Really, really proud.” (Dominic 18)



Breadwinner role: Lack of resources

- “I don’t have the money to provide but on the other hand I really do want to be able to provide.” (Ben, aged 20)
- Young age/still at school: “I’m the one who’s meant to support the baby. Without her [paternal grandmother’s] financial support or anything, I don’t know where I would have got the money from. Obviously I’d have been really stuck.” (Senwe, aged 16)
- Unemployment: “I’m fed up of everyone telling me to get off me arse and get a job. . . It’s alright saying [but] there’s no jobs.” (Richard, aged 16)
- Skills training: “Only problem is, is finding a job [laughs]. . . I’ve had a couple of interviews. But like I struggle to talk. I talk like an idiot!” (Jason, aged 22)
- Welfare support: “I don’t think they give you anywhere near the amount of money that it costs to raise a kid”(Tommy, aged 24)

New fatherhood ideals

“It don't matter about items. It don't matter what you buy them. It don't matter about money. It's just about love, care and obviously being there. And being able to say 'yeah I'm there all the time'. That's what matters.” (Darren, aged 21)

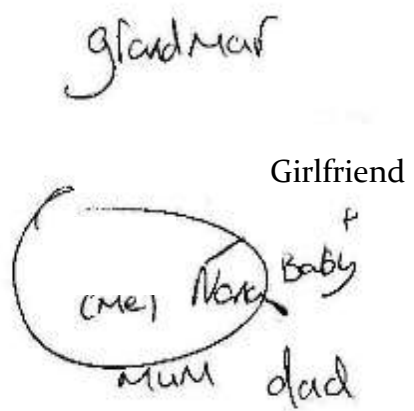
“I just want to be the sort of person who he can turn to and he can, you know, asks things, you know, if he's got any problems or any issues.” (Dominic, aged 18)

“It's important to bond with them, to be able to talk to them and have that relationship. Like a friend relationship but still be a dad.” (Adam, aged 16)

Close relationships: Mother of the child & grandparents

- Father-child relationships tend to be mediated initially through the **mother of the child**
- “She owes me three years of the kids lives” (Tarrell, aged 21)
- Positive and negative accounts of **grandparents**
- Must work with the dynamic of the maternal household
- “I’d just like her to sit back and be a grandmother instead of a mother.” (Jason, aged 22)

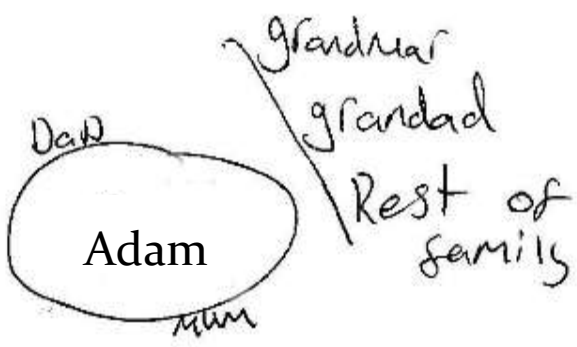
Wave 1:



Wave 3:



Wave 2:



Girlfriend's Mum & dad

Girlfriend's M/D

Professional support

- **Specialist support is crucial**
- “I don’t know where I would be without him. Yeah and he taught me a lot as well.” (Callum, aged 19)

- **Professional support lacking**
- “It’s all mums and babies.” (Jack, aged 23)
- “It’s more of support with welfare issues [needed]. Having someone to, if you run into problems, you know, saying ‘I need help.’” (Dominic, aged 18)

The way forward. . .

- Understanding what matters and what works
- QL research: time as a resource and tool for policy evaluation
- Practice informed research and research-based practice
- Effective services = understanding service users needs