School of Sociology & Social Policy
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL SCIENCES & LAW

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SEEING YOUNG FATHERS IN A DIFFERENT WAY

LIVED EXPERIENCES, POLICY CHALLENGES, PRACTICE DEVELOPMENTS

ONE DAY CONFERENCE:
30th September 2015
SEEING YOUNG FATHERS IN A DIFFERENT WAY
Lived Experiences, Policy Challenges, Practice Developments

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GREAT WOODHOUSE ROOM, UNIVERSITY HOUSE, UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS.

The notion of ‘feckless’ young men, who are assumed to be disinterested in ‘being there,’ or, worse, regarded as a potential risk to their children, continues to hold sway, particularly in popular, media and some political discourses. However emerging research evidence counters such viewpoints and demonstrate that young fathers do care about and want to ‘be there’ for their children; they aspire to being treated as clients of services that will support their parenting; and there is mounting evidence to suggest that where they are positively engaged in these ways, this is beneficial to them, their children, the mothers, and the wider families.

This major counterbalance to the rhetoric surrounding ‘deadbeat’ dads and ‘problem’ youth has been slow to gain ground, but the potential for young fathers to make a positive contribution to their children’s lives, and to improve their own life chances, is slowly being realised.

This conference will set out to put young fathers firmly on the map and to enable policy makers and professionals to see these young men in a different way. Through presentations and workshops the conference will explore the varied trajectories of young men, their fathering journeys across time and their support needs, with policy and practice implications as a central consideration. Alison Hadley (Director of Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange) will be providing the key note address. New research from the ESRC funded Following Young Fathers study (2012-15) will be presented and a range of professional workers and local champions for young fathers will share practice and insights into what works, for whom and under what circumstances.
PROGRAMME
30TH SEPTEMBER 2015
Great Woodhouse Room, University House, University of Leeds

09:30 -10:00  | Registration/Refreshments
10:00 -10:05  | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Chair, Owen Thomas, Working with Men) Message to the conference from David Lammy MP (Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood)
10:05 -10:40  | KEYNOTE
              | YOUNG FATHERHOOD: CHALLENGES FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE (Alison Hadley OBE, Director, Teenage Pregnancy Knowledge Exchange, University of Bedfordshire)
10:40 -11:10  | THE FOLLOWING YOUNG FATHERS STUDY: Introduction (Professor Bren Neale) The Following Young Fathers study: Key findings (Dr. Carmen Lau Clayton) Followed by launch of the briefing paper series and practitioner resources
11:10 -11:30  | Refreshments
11:30-12:45  | BREAK-OUT SESSIONS 1
              | 1. The Involvement of Young Fathers in Ante-natal and Post-natal care, and the Birth of their Children (Sean O’Sullivan, Royal College of Midwives)
              | 2. Supporting Young Offender Fathers through Custody and into Resettlement (Kate Bulman, Oakhill Secure Training Centre with young fathers Ruben and Anthony)
              | 3. Increasing the Visibility of Young Fathers 1: Culture Change and Listening to Young Fathers (Mark Osborn, formerly of the Fatherhood Institute)
12:45 -13:30  | Lunch – submit your questions to young fathers for the final panel
13:30 -14:45  | BREAK-OUT SESSIONS 2
              | 1. Mentoring Needs and Holistic Service Provision (John May, Leeds City Council and young father Daniel Johnson)
              | 2. Housing Needs and Support (Archway and Linzi Ladlow, University of Leeds)
14:45 -15:00  | Refreshments
15:00 -15:45  | FEEDBACK FROM BREAK OUT SESSIONS
15:45 -16:15  | PANEL SESSION WITH SPEAKERS/CONVENORS/YOUNG FATHERS
16:15 -16:30  | Closing Reflections
These sessions will give delegates the opportunity to share insights and good practice on the needs and circumstances of young fathers and the most effective ways for professionals to engage with and support them. Delegates will be able to sign up for two sessions, one before lunch and one after lunch.

The sessions are wide ranging, covering the pregnancy and birthing process, housing needs and experiences, and journeys through and beyond the custodial estate. Spanning statutory and voluntary sector provision, we will explore recent initiatives to increase the visibility of young fathers and to increase the effectiveness of professional engagement.

The sessions are convened by leading professionals who are pioneering new ways to engage with young fathers and advance professional practice. Contributions from young fathers will enrich the sessions and ensure lively debate.

**TEN TOP TIPS**

The sessions will start with a short presentation from the convenor to introduce the theme, current state of knowledge and latest practice developments. This will be followed by a round table discussion on the key issues and challenges for professional practice. The aim will be to develop ‘ten top tips’ for professional practice, encompassing what matters to young fathers; what works for whom, in what circumstances and over what time frames; and what to avoid.

We will seek a volunteer from among the practitioners at the sessions to act as a scribe for the group, and to provide feedback on behalf of the group in the afternoon plenary. Following the conference, a report on the themes of the conference and insights from the breakout sessions will be produced and posted on the project website (followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk).

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1. **THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG FATHERS IN ANTE-NATAL AND POST-NATAL CARE, AND THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILDREN** (Sean O’Sullivan, Head of Health and Social Policy, Royal College of Midwives) 11.30am, Great Woodhouse Room

How do young fathers engage with universal maternity services in the period between the conception of their child and the birth? To what extent are they encouraged by health professionals to be involved as clients in their own right in the time leading up to the birth, during the birth itself and in the postnatal period? What are the key milestones that they might engage in, and how might these help to foster their fledgling identities and commitments as young fathers? And how much does all this depend on the nature of their relationship with the mother of the child, who, along with her child, is seen as the primary client of these services? In this session, Sean O’Sullivan of the Royal College of Midwives presents a brief overview of these issues for maternity services in England and Wales, and leads a discussion on the challenges and potential for increasing support for young fathers in a setting that is traditionally concerned with child and maternal health, and focuses on support for mothers and/or established couples.

2. **SUPPORTING YOUNG OFFENDER FATHERS THROUGH CUSTODY AND INTO RESETTLEMENT: EFFECTIVE PARENTING PROGRAMMES AND FOLLOW UP SERVICES FOR YOUNG FATHERS** (Kate Bulman, Staff Nurse, Oakhill Secure Training Centre, Anthony and Ruben) 11.30am, St George Room

What are the particular needs and circumstances of young, disadvantaged offender fathers? What are the challenges of working with this group of young men – what hinders and what helps? How helpful is the ‘risk’ framework for working with these young men? How feasible is an alternative ‘redemption’ framework? Kate Bulman, practice nurse, introduces the award winning parenthood support and training scheme that she has developed at Oakhill Secure Training Centre and provides an overview of her project to provide sustained, co-ordinated support as she follows the young men into resettlement. Working with two of her trainees, Kate will lead the discussion on the key elements that make for a successful parenting programme for young highly disadvantaged fathers, and its potential application in other professional settings.
3. INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF YOUNG FATHERS 1: CULTURE CHANGE AND LISTENING TO YOUNG FATHERS (Dr. Mark Osborn, formerly of the Fatherhood Institute) 11.30am, Beech Grove Room

How ‘visible’ are young fathers in statutory service settings – and in what ways? To what extent are they encountered with suspicion, dismissal or respect? And how does this feed into professional perceptions of these young men as ‘hard to reach’, ‘disengaged, or simply ‘absent’? How can we encourage a culture change in generic service provision to make young fathers ‘count’ and to see them in a different way? Dr. Mark Osborn, will lead the discussion, drawing on reflections from young fathers.

4. COUNSELLING NEEDS AND HOLISTIC SERVICE PROVISION (John May, Former Learning Mentor, Leeds City Council and Daniel Johnson) 1.30pm, St George Room

How effective is one to one mentoring support for young fathers and what difference does it make to young fathers themselves? What challenges and constraints do practitioners face in the provision of such support and how best can these be tackled? Former learning mentor John May, along with a former mentee, explore with the group the impact, benefits and challenges of providing individualised, holistic and sustained support for young fathers.

5. HOUSING NEEDS AND SUPPORT (Archway, Benefits Advisor and Linzi Ladlow, Following Young Fathers, University Leeds) 1.30pm, Beech Grove Room

Housing and home building are important foundations for the care of young children. Yet young fathers may have few resources to set up an independent household and, in any case, may have a limited caring role in comparison to young mothers, who are usually perceived as the primary carers. Where young fathers cannot rely on a home with their own parents, what state provision is available and to what extent can it be accessed by young fathers, either as part of a couple or in their own right? Archway provides floating support for young parents and this session will explore the scope of the service to meet the needs of young fathers, the implications of the bedroom tax and changes to housing benefits. The group will explore the wider housing needs and experiences of young fathers, the extent to which existing housing provision meets these needs, and the implications for service provision and development.

6. INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF YOUNG FATHERS 2: THE YOUNG DADS COUNCIL: COLLECTIVE VOICES AND SELF HELP (Hannah Turner, Project Manager - Hannah Turner-Uaandja, Project Manager and 2 fathers from the Young Dads Council) 1.30pm, Great Woodhouse

A growing number of self-help and peer support schemes for young fathers are appearing in the UK. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of this trend is the development of the Young Dads Council which grew out of a collective called Young Dads TV. In this session, Hannah Turner-Uaandja, project manager of the Young Dads Council, along with two members of the Council, explore the principles of peer led services design for young fathers and the development of a ‘young dads collective voice’. She leads a discussion on the value of such schemes to enable young fathers to develop the statutory provisions available for their peers whilst increasing their own self-confidence and their capacity to make good choices for the future, to support each other to increase understanding of young fathers and campaign for legislative change at both local and national levels. The group will also explore the vital role of professionals in facilitating and supporting young fathers to get organised to help themselves.