Young fathers in Cornwall
Best practice for services in St Blazey
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in making this report. I was amazed by the response I got with so many people being so helpful in such a short period of time.

A special thanks has to go to all the young fathers who made the content of this report ‘real’ and I felt privileged to have met them all.

I need to thank Wayne Cross from the White Gold project as without his early response to my request for help I would have become despondent and without many interviews.

Thank-you Rob Cannicot for your great attitude and help.

Thank-you Jane Acton and Ria Taylor for your support, guidance and editing skills.

A big thanks to Fiona Brennan for her editing skills, advice and patience.


“The mum had five workers and no-one was speaking to me. No one asked me how I felt about the situation or even how I was doing.”
23 year old father of one (3)

Developing the best practice for services for young fathers in St Blazey

Restormel Family Services commissioned research ‘To develop a proposal of the best practice for services for young fathers in St Blazey’. This came from recognising that there were no young fathers services in Cornwall and that St Blazey had high rates of teenage parents, domestic violence and disaffected young men.

Early on in the research it became apparent that there was no recorded statistical data about young fathers, there could be twenty or two hundred.

Another issue was that young fathers were not coming forward, raising the profile within the community was not working.

However, organisations and projects whose clients might include young fathers, twenty five years and under, were contacted and made aware of the research.

This proved to be successful and contacts started to be made. With an uncertainty of how many young fathers would be contacted interviews became the predominant method of data collection, with a ‘never waste a contact’ approach.

The interviews provided rich and fascinating qualitative data, proving the socially accepted stereotype of young fathers was far from true. They are at the forefront of a quiet revolution that is the twenty first century father. The combination of documentary research and the interviews provided the information to make key recommendations and develop a model for best practice that can be used at local to national levels. The principal recommendation was that young fathers in Cornwall should be provided with a service without having to go to prison to get it.
Contents

Forward 5
Introduction 6
Methodology 8

The sample 8
No data 8
Finding young fathers 8
Existing service users 9
Development of different type of sample 9
Network/snowball sampling through practitioners and young fathers 10
Never waste a contact 10
Methods of data collection 10

Findings part one: Young fathers 13

Young fathers are not systematically recorded 13
Young people 14
Characteristics of young fathers 14
Substance and alcohol misuse 14
Young offenders 15
Domestic violence 15
Looking for work and being unemployed 15
Demonised - perceptions of young fathers 16
The universal response to being a father 17
Cycle of exclusion 19
Benefits for the mother 19
Father’s rights 20
Not asking for help 20
Gatekeepers to the children 20

Findings part two: Services 21

Local services 21
Information 21
Young fathers do not access services 21
Young fathers experiences of services 21
Maternity Services 22
Case study- 22 year old step-father and father 22
Social Care 24
Children’s Centres 24
So why are they not accessing them? 25
The importance of working with fathers 25
Saturdads 27
Services for fathers in prison 27
Specific young father’s projects 27
It needs to be a one to one approach 27
A young fathers group 28
Both one to one and a group 29
Dads training days 30
Days out 30
Days out with the family 30
Dads packs 31
Venues 31
Worker 31
Funding 32
Numbers of young fathers 32
Issues that might be dealt with 32

**Conclusions** 34
Service provision 35
Best practice for services for young fathers in St Blazey 35
Final Conclusions 37

**Model of Best Practice** 38

**Appendices** 39
Appendices 1 to 9

**References** 49
Foreword

I was delighted to be asked to write a foreword to this piece of research ‘Developing the Best Practice for Services for Young Fathers in St. Blazey’. This work is not only important as it addresses a number of issues around young fatherhood in the South West of England which are relevant and applicable to other parts of the country, but is also timely because the need for statutory services to reach and engage systemically with young fathers is higher than it has ever been on the political agenda. It is clear both from the work that Robert Beale has carried out, as well as the research I have completed personally, that there still remains a dearth of information about young fathers both broadly (e.g. how many there are) and more specifically (e.g. the needs of those who are very young, from minority ethnic groups, living in poverty, non-resident, or who have specific needs, such as mental or physical health problems).

It is often difficult for services wanting to engage with young fathers to know the best ways of going about this without an appropriate research evidence base to draw upon which reflects the voices of young fathers themselves. The intention of this research is to provide such an evidence-base at a local level for developing services for young fathers in Restormel, and ultimately across Cornwall. This bottom-up approach to service development where the young fathers’ agenda is seen as the starting point is commendable, and I look forward to following the progress of service development for young fathers in the Cornish region.

Dr. Nigel Sherriff
IHDRC, University of Brighton
Supporting Young Fathers Network (Trust for the Study of Adolescence)
Introduction

Working with fathers and young fathers is starting to be recognised as an important component of the professional practice of organisations working with children, young people and families.

As one half of the ‘whole’ that brings children into the world, fathers have often been missed out when it comes to services available to them. The service’s for fathers have been ‘bolted on’ to existing provision for mums with the same model being used for the fathers work. These services do not engage men and will often do the opposite, confirming negative perceptions of what services are available to them.

However, change is happening, with ongoing research, pressure groups, successful projects and organisations being established nationally and locally. Although there is a positive, if slow, change, in what services are now available to fathers these services are not working for young fathers.

Young fathers, those who are 25 years and under, are not accessing services Quinton (2002) found young fathers ‘mostly ignored, marginalized or made uncomfortable by services, despite their desire for information, advice and inclusion’.

Many of these will have experienced exclusion so frequently in their lifetime that they hope that fatherhood will be the key to breaking this cycle but often it only reinforces their previous experiences (Osborn. 2007).

Men and fathers have changed significantly over the last one hundred years. The concept and construction of modern masculinity has led to a very different ‘twenty first century father’ from those a hundred years ago.

Unfortunately, many services have not ‘kept up’ with this change.

Research with fathers has identified a list of benefits for children of paternal involvement:

- It is related to higher levels of educational attainment
- Children are less likely to become involved in adolescent delinquency and involvement with the police
- It protects against psychological maladjustment in separated families
- It is associated with fewer emotional and behavioral problems
- It is associated with reported satisfactory relationships in adult life
- It is associated with positive parent and child relationships during adolescence (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera, 1999).

Mothers benefit too. High father involvement
is linked with lower parenting stress and depression in Mums” (Fisher et al 2006)

This research has been commissioned by, Family Services Restormel, in order to produce a proposal of best practice for developing services for young fathers. The remit for the study also acknowledged that there are fathers groups running in Cornwall but no services for young fathers.

A location for the research was needed, and St Blazey was the area chosen.

St Blazey has:
- The highest rates of domestic abuse in Cornwall
- One of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Cornwall
- A significant number of disaffected young men in the area often reflected in local crime records.

A qualitative research method was undertaken to identify the needs of young fathers in the St Blazey area.

**The aim:**
- To develop a proposal of the best practice for services for young fathers in St Blazey.

The research shows:
- The young men’s experiences of fatherhood
- The young fathers involvement with their children
- Characteristics of young fathers
- What Young fathers experiences of services have been
- What young fathers are asking for in a service
- Methods of working with young fathers
- Findings not immediately related to the research but that are regarded as significant

- The need for a service for young fathers in Cornwall.
- A proposed model of ‘best practice’

If this ‘best practice’ proposal is successful, the suggestion is to then roll it out across southern Restormel and then Cornwall.
Methodology

The sample

When conducting this type of qualitative research about a group within the community, young fathers, it is desirable to get a representative sample of those you wish to study. This type of non-probability selective sampling enables the researcher to learn something about the larger population of young fathers without having to study them all. As an example if twenty percent of the young fathers in St Blazey were non-resident fathers the aim would be to get twenty percent of the sample group to be non-resident fathers.

No data

In order to define the population to be studied various different organisations were contacted to gain an insight into:

- The number of young fathers in St Blazey, other Cornish parishes and Cornwall. Having these would enable comparisons for example if St Blazey has a higher rate of young fathers than elsewhere in Cornwall.
- Their location. In order to make contact with young fathers, identify locations to focus on, hotspots and possible common themes.
- The ages of the young fathers. This helps to get a snapshot of the spread of ages.

The various organisations were unable to provide this. This could be because:

- Some organisations do not have any way of recording if young fathers are using their services. They do not record if clients are parents/fathers.
- There is nothing set up and nowhere to store and share this information.
- The services that do record this type of information are not being used by young fathers.

Having little baseline data had an impact on the methodology as finding young fathers proved problematic.

This meant that raising the profile of the research was going to be key in finding the young fathers to study.

It was possible to get implied data about young fathers by knowing about young mums and via current data available showing the teenage pregnancy rates (appendix one). However, it can only be assumed here that the fathers were of a young age.

Finding young fathers

With no information available it was important to raise the profile of the research. In view of the time constraints and the lack of data the remit was extended to include any young fathers in Cornwall and for recruitment the researcher focused on two main areas;

Organisations

The researcher decided that because of his previous youth work experiences that it was likely that many organisations were already working with young fathers. Face to face practitioners were seen as a potentially valuable resource for contacts. For this to happen it was necessary to contact the highest authority within these organisations and ask for their help and support. This would enable practitioners to have the confidence and permission to link up with the researcher. Thirty three organisations were contacted (appendix two). This involved e-mails, phone calls, formal letters and site visits.
**Community**

This was about making the public and local young fathers aware of the research. This was done through school visits, posters, flyers and press release’s (appendix three).

1. To try and make young fathers aware of the research. This would include the basic aims of the research and give them a variety of contact options.

2. To raise the profile of the research. This would open up the opportunity for people connected with young fathers to get in contact or they could encourage young fathers to do so.

3. It was a way of raising the awareness of the research to other professionals which would then validate the research and possibly provide more contacts.

In the original research plan the researcher had intended on spending more time raising the profile within the community, however, early interviews with young fathers revealed that pursuing this as a way of making contacts was a waste of time. They explained that this was something they would not respond to. One young father explained that he had even picked up the flyer but it was only when his probation officer discussed the research and offered to set up the interview that he took part. During the interviews when they discussed how they perceived services there seemed to be connection between these two see [So why are they not accessing them? Findings Part two].

**Existing service users**

Linking with existing service users as a way to find young fathers was a recommendation that came from previous young fathers research. For this research it involved going to existing young mums groups. This proved to be a useful method. The researcher was able to gain some great ideas and recommendations from the young mums as well as some valuable contacts. The young mums were always happy to help and were very supportive of both the research and the idea of services for young fathers. (Notes from these discussions are under appendix four)

**Development of a different type of sample**

With no data available a different type of representative sample was sought, desk research suggested several types of young fathers so the new aim was to try and get at least one from each group. The following table shows the spread of the type of fathers contact was made with. It is important to note that there are some crossovers e.g. a father who is a biological father and an adult male with a father role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological fathers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step fathers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult males with father role</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers of disabled child</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled fathers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers from BME background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers to be</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident fathers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with children fathers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age fathers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total contacts made</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total interviews</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Network/snowball sampling through practitioners and young fathers

This type of sampling is used to obtain a sample from numerically small groups or ‘hard to reach’ groups. It generally involves contacting a member of the sample group and asking them if they know anyone else who fits the sample characteristics.

In this research the young fathers and face to face practitioners were crucial in providing contacts and providing information about local young fathers. During interviews if another young father was mentioned the researcher would ask if permission could be gained to have their contact details passed onto him. Practitioners were happy to help set up contacts with young fathers they were working with. They would contact the researcher and enquire about what it was about and what would happen, they would then either get permission and pass on the contact details or set up an interview which would include a quiet location to chat.

Never waste a contact

Contacts provided by practitioners or other young fathers were always acted on. Due to the lack of contacts questionnaires were not used and interviews were always set up. There was a low drop-out for those who were booked into interviews only three were unable to attend out of twenty nine.

The contacts were slow to start but as the research came to an end the information had been able to disseminate down to the face to face practitioners and the contacts increased rapidly.

Methods of data collection

Questionnaires

In the early design of the research it was considered that questionnaires (appendix five) would be a quick and simple way of collecting data that could then be translated in to more quantitative conclusions.

The idea was to have practitioners distribute them to young fathers while they were working with them. This would help:

- To avoid the standard rate of non-returns which is generally high if sent out by post.
- If there were any problems with understanding the questions or if the clients had a disability.

The level of confidentiality that this method offers could have been affected as the practitioners would have collected them back and this could have had an impact on the reliability of the responses.

It was designed to be simple and easy to use with closed questions at the beginning and open questions at the end. The last question gave the option of passing on the clients contact details which would have given the researcher the option of setting up an interview.

The small amount of contacts initially made and lack of fathers coming forward from any of the publicity changed the data collection focus onto interviews.
Interviews: 

Young fathers

The only contacts being made were through practitioners, young mums and the researcher. Due to the low numbers the emphasis had to be on collecting qualitative data and interviews are one of the best methods for this. Another reason for using this method was the recommendation from practitioners, working with young fathers, that a one to one approach for the initial contact was the most effective way of engaging with them (Davies, J. 2004, Wood, A, 2009, Tennant, H. 2009, May, J. 2009, Sherriff, N. 2007)

The process of a young father’s interview:

1. Contact details. Through the network sampling process and after verbal consent was given by the new contact their details were passed on to the researcher and an introduction phone call was made re-checking that consent had been given.

2. Setting up the interview. This would include the day, time and venue. Practitioners would phone and ask for some information and then set this up themselves. A phone call was then made on the day to confirm.

3. The interview. First written consent would be asked for (appendix six). With that a run through of other important information was given before asking the young father if they were still happy to continue. The interview would then start.

It was always important to clarify that they were taking part in some research and that there was no project or service available.

The young father’s interviews were semi-structured with open and closed questions (appendix seven). The researcher also gave the opportunity for the interviews to follow an unstructured path if it was relevant, this came from recognising early on in the research that for many of them this was the first time they had discussed, in depth, their role as a father.

The amount of contacts increased as the research was coming to an end which was positive for any future project.

Practitioners

This involved speaking to:

1. Local face to face practitioners who had some contact with young fathers. This was, a Youth Worker, a White Gold worker and a Health Visitor who was also a team leader for 3 different areas.

2. Practitioners working in successful and established projects specifically for young fathers. These were all within the UK and were from a list provided by Nigel Sherriff in ‘Supporting Young Fathers-Examples of Promising Practice’ (2007). The four who were interviewed were selected because they returned phone calls or e-mails within the set time frame.

Interviews became the main data collection tool for the research and this had both its advantages and disadvantages.
Advantages
- Able to gain a great depth of information
- To be able to peruse key issues with each individual
- Able to identify individuals priorities, ideas and opinions
- Very flexible in that interviews can follow a route that is significant to the interviewee
- Allows new topics to be introduced
- Good validity in that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance during the interview
- The young fathers as a whole seemed to enjoy the experience
- A minimal amount of equipment needed

Disadvantages
- Very time consuming. Travel and the transcription of interviews.
- High fuel costs especially when they are not local.
- As opposed to the questionnaires they are not pre-coded and have an open format so the analysis takes longer
- The interviewer effect, you are recording what they say not what they do and interviewees classically say things that they think the researcher wants to hear
- In a strict research perspective the data is only relevant to the interviewer and the context it was in therefore giving an adverse effect

Documentary research
Analysis of other research and current young fathers projects
This involved looking at previous research and other documents produced about young fathers and material based on subjects relevant to the research.

There is a considerable amount of research done about fathers and young fathers with the more recent studies incorporating the change in modern men and their roles as fathers. The Fatherhood Institute and the Trust for the Study of Adolescence are two of the bigger organisations funding and collecting important information about both theory and practice in these subject areas.

Mark Osbourn has also put his nine years of working with young fathers into a thesis ‘Being There-Young Men’s Experience and Perception of Fatherhood’ and many more practitioners, nurses through to sexual health workers, have independently or through organisations provided useful internet and paper based documentary evidence.

This data, although secondary, proved to be very useful when trying to find common themes and areas to study.

Criticisms of documentary research can be; the credibility of the source and the interpretation of the data by those who produced it. This was relevant to this research and when studied the lack of conflicting data suggests a general consensus or a lack of alternative research.

Ages of young fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No’s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ages of young fathers at first conception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings part one: Young fathers

Young fathers are not systematically recorded

Details of young mums are recorded by the health authorities. These records can then be used to create statistics. These statistics can then be used to create league tables that are significant to the UK as they currently show we have the highest rate of (live) teenage births in Western Europe (UNICEF 2001, Ward 2005, in Sherriff, 2007).

These findings are then used as a tool to implement strategies, reports, research, services and projects and are also used to make funding available as a way of trying to tackle the high rates of teenage pregnancies and bring about change.

All of these rely on the recorded statistics.

The table below shows the recorded numbers of young fathers both nationally and locally.

| Recorded Young fathers in the UK | 0 |
| Recorded Young fathers in Cornwall | 0 |

Young fathers are those with a father role and who are under twenty five years of age.

This research has found that there are at least 36 young fathers with the above remit in Cornwall.

Although, there is no national recording of how many young fathers there are in the country, we do know they exist, as many successful projects and services are working with them.

We know young fathers are out there, we know that they are contributing to the rates of teenage pregnancies but we do not systematically record them.

These young men who are part of our communities are essentially invisible in the world of data. This type of data is crucial when trying to assess needs or looking at methods to bring about change.

At a national level, Government needs to improve the collection of data on young fathers. Whilst data collected through the Connexions Customer Information Service (CCIS) contains information on teenage mothers and their engagement in education and training, we know very little about young men aged 16 plus, especially those not in education, employment or training (NEET), including whether or not they are young fathers. This needs to be asked and recorded routinely as part of the CCIS.


“Younger marginalized men who become fathers are not only perhaps the most at risk, but are also the most invisible”

(Ferguson & Hogan, 2004)

“Teenage Dad(s) are a known group to nationally target for data and a report was realised in 2006 saying about better data collection, but nationally no-one has managed this” (Buchanan, L, 2009. Information and Research Officer, Children, Schools and Families, Cornwall Council)
Young people
Practitioners and research both show that the approach for young fathers work has to be that “primarily they are young people with young peoples needs”.

It is well documented through research and their own experiences that young people experience social exclusion (Brown A, 2002) and are often ignored, patronised and in extreme cases feared.

“Today citizens as a whole as well as people who work with children live in fear of youth in our homes and schools and on our streets.” (Bender, SJ, et al 1997)

Some of the parents interviewed reflected on this negative feeling.

“It was alright but I think they was kinda judging us because we were young, you’ know young people having kids You do get a lot of people these days that think oh young people having babies they don’t have a clue what they are doing.” 19yr old father of one and his partner (20)

“We kinda get stared at when we stand outside the school gates, we haven’t much in common with the other parents” 21 year old father of one and father to be (23)

Characteristics of young fathers
Research demonstrates that young fathers show the following characteristics:

- Low SES (based on income, occupation and education)
- Have poor academic skills
- Demonstrate anti-social behavior
- Substance abuse
- Exposure to family violence in early childhood
- Parental separation/divorce


Independently they are a factor in becoming a young father but incrementally they increase that possibility (Miller-Johnson et al 2004).

The table below shows how those young fathers interviewed corresponded to these characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Numbers of Young fathers</th>
<th>Percentage of those interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance and alcohol misuse</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offending or anti-social behavior</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Domestic Violence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed*1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1. There were six variations on this that are not included, they are:
- One had been prevented from starting a job by social care
- One had sporadic work
- One was attending a local project for young people not in employment, education or training
- One could not work due a serious medical condition
- One had only been made redundant the week before

Substance and alcohol misuse
Young fathers have a connection with alcohol and substance misuse.


Twenty of the young fathers who showed this as a characteristic had also classed their fatherhood experience as ‘life changing’.
When describing this they had all included changing this part of their life. Some had chosen abstinence others decided to exclude some and moderate others.

“I wouldn’t go and see her [my daughter] when I was on the heroin. But I couldn’t go when I wasn’t because I was in cold turkey and I didn’t want her to see me like that. So that’s why I went into rehab” 20 year old father of one (9)

“I used to drink, smoke weed get into trouble. That all changed when I met my partner and when my daughter came around I stopped it all.” 21 year old father of one (16)

“No more drink and drugs, which is what I was all about, before I found out I was going to be a Dad” 16 year old father to be (now a father) of one (10)

**Young offenders**

“The degree of disadvantage experienced by young fathers is graphically illustrated by the strong correlation between being a young father and being a young offender. Among 15-17 year old offenders 12% have children of their own (Prisons Inspectorate estimate); and among those aged 22 and under, nearly half are (or are about to become) fathers – as well as having, on average, literacy/numeracy levels below age 11. Over half have been in care; many have experienced violence or sexual abuse at home; and few have had models of good fathering” (Young Voice, 2005). (Fatherhood Institute, 2008a)

As with substance and alcohol misuse many saw having their child as the opportunity and reason for a change in their life. This has also been the main driver for the impressive fathers courses provided in HM prisons as there is a connection between re-offending and being an involved father.

“I’ve just stopped it all and changed-priorities. I don’t wanna be in and out of prison or anything, it’ll ruin it cause he’ll get to know me and then I’ll be gone.” 24 year old father of one (24)

“I was in a lot of trouble. I don’t want to be inside and miss her birthdays and Christmas’s” 20 year old father of one (11)

“I’ve had kids and it calmed me right down, like I don’t fight with the police anymore. I’ve just got things from my past catching up with me now” 20 year old father of three (12)

**Domestic violence**


As part of the interviews the question was asked.

Have you ever experienced Domestic Violence?

10 replied yes (38%)

Some information was known about these responses. Some had been victims and one had been arrested as a perpetrator. The researcher felt that it would be inappropriate to press for information if it wasn’t offered.

In research terms the ‘reliability’ of all the responses are questionable due to the nature of interviews as a method of data collection and with that the interviews were the first contact with these young fathers. Long term work with young fathers may reveal a higher or lower rate and will also provide a greater understanding of levels of domestic violence.

**Looking for work and being unemployed**

Young Dads are often unemployed, but see employment as a key issue to supporting their children. (Jaffee et al, 2001, Speak et al, 1997, Rhein et al, 1997).

One of the young fathers explained when asked the question ‘have your priorities changed?’ replied “I’ve got myself a job to provide for my family”(11)

All of the unemployed young fathers saw this
as important and there could be a connection with the traditional role of the father and employment.

“I had mixed emotions [when holding his daughter for the first time]. I couldn’t work, my girlfriend couldn’t work as she had just had a baby and I wanted to provide for my family.” 24 year old father of one (17). Who couldn’t work due a serious health problem.

This was a point of interest as during one interview it was noted that men find it hard to know what to be. This young father explained that he felt there was pressure for the father to take traditional roles, such as the ‘breadwinner’ and even ‘the protector’ but then also to be a much more involved and even the main carer.(18).

Those who had spent custodial sentences highlighted that finding work would be especially hard with having to put down their convictions on application forms. One young father also told the researcher how having a conviction prevented him from having a job that involved selling lottery tickets.

**Demonised - perceptions of young fathers**

‘I know it doesn’t look good, but it’s the dads I blame,’ she says. ‘They never want to hang around as they are too interested in drink and drugs.’ (Daily Mail 2009)

One of the unexpected findings from this research has been the perception of young fathers by most of those who the researcher met. The researcher found a significant amount of negative feeling about young fathers. This came from; professionals, members of the community, social settings and surprisingly from young father’s themselves.

“Some of my mates are dads, but they just talk about it, they don’t spend time with their kids, so there not real dads”

21 year old step father and father to be (23)

There were various suggestions made about their characteristics but the general consensus was that they:

“Did not want to be around for their children and weren’t interested in them.”

Another popular comment was,

“They sit around all day smoking marijuana and playing games consoles.”

The perception seemed to come from people they knew or they had heard of. The examples given may well have been true but what this research has been able to ascertain is that there are many more young fathers who do not fit this description. However, they are perhaps not as well known as these other fathers.
The universal response to being a father and other common themes

All the young fathers responded positively to being a father. A valid criticism of interviewing as a method of data collection is that those being interviewed say what they think the interviewer ‘wants to hear’. However, the body language that accompanied their comments was open and positive.

“It’s alright, yeah it’s good”
16 year old father to be (10)

“my daughter is the best thing that has ever happened to me” 19 year old father of one (3)

“Probably the most awesome thing I’ve ever done. I was in a bad place at the time. It was the making of me.” 25 year old father of one (18)

“There’s nothing I dislike, there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for my kids, I wouldn’t change anything” 22 year old father and step-father (22)

They also added that ‘it’s hard’.

“I freaked out about it. Not when I knew I was going to be a dad and all the way through the pregnancy, I was fine, but then when she was actually born sort of a couple of days after that and I was a bit like wow.

I was 21 at the time I’d just started going out and all that lot you know. And I just freaked out, you know. I thought I can’t look after myself how am I gunna look after a baby!

I got good support from my family and now everything is alright” 24 year old father of one (17)

“It’s exciting, but hard” 22 year old father of one and step-father of one (19)

“It’s hard. At first I found it really hard like, the getting up all the time, hardly any sleep, but you just get used to it, I love it now, brilliant” 21 year old father of one (24)

A common fear was of breaking new born babies

“I’m worried I’m going to hurt her that’s why I won’t change her or do her nappies”. 19 year old father of one (20)

“At the start I wasn’t very cuddly because I didn’t want to break her. I just watched her” 22 year old father and step father (22)

Involvement with their children

Again all, but one, of the young fathers were involved with their children’s lives. The most common examples of involvement were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do everything</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing nappies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding (including some doing night feeds)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking them out</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting them to bed</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with them</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that these figures are taken from these terms actually being used in the interview, it doesn’t mean other young fathers weren’t doing them.

These roles have been seen in the past to be the more ‘female’ roles with the father taking the active/physical role. (Lamb 2004)

And even among very young (teenage) fathers most are involved and interested in child rearing (Rhein et al, 1997).

Young dads want to be involved with their children (Speak et al 1997, Quniton et al 2002, Bunting & McAuley, 2004).

“A survey of 500 men showed that for a majority of those with children, being a successful parent was their most important personal goal.” (Harker, L et al 2006)

“The average time spent by fathers with young children on childcare activities has increased eight-fold since the 1970s.” (O’Brien, M. 2005)
“I change them, dress them, get up in the night, pay for all the stuff for when she goes to school, it’s just basically making sure they are happy. Bathing, playing, going to the park all of it.” 21 year old father of two, one non-resident (25)

“I do everything, Bathing, changing nappies, playing all the time, taking her out, putting her to bed. I’m thinking about a ballet class that I can take her too, I won’t be pushy but it could be good for her” 24 year old father of one (17)

“I’ve done everything. I’ve looked after her, changed her nappies, got up with her in the night, I’ve been as full-on and as hands-on as [partners name] has.

It would be whoever was there at the time would do it. Just sharing the jobs” 21 year old step father and father to be (23)

The young fathers saw their role as equal to the mums, sharing the responsibilities.

“I do everything, the up and downs you just get into a routine, I always used to get up in the night, take him out to places in the day, changing him, put him to bed, feed him, playing with him.

Now I see him twice a week, usually at the weekend I’ll stay over at his mums. I try and spend as much time as I can over there when I go. It’s nice that I can give my ex some time, so when I’m over there I’ll do loads of stuff, give her a break. It just works best like that” 21 year old father of one (24)

This was something that came up with some other young fathers who were non-resident. They saw supporting the Mum as part of having involvement with their child or children.

One of the non-resident fathers explained the difficulties that this type of close sharing of roles can be when one of the parents develops a relationship outside of this unit.

“We both lived in [the same town] and so we did a lot of things together. We have a more measured arrangement now, where as it used to be more fluid. I also know that eventually a new partner, if not this one, will become a sort of father figure, that will be hard for me” 25 year old father of one (18)

There are many more issues that are raised from being a non-resident father not covered in this research and as the Bradshaw et al (1998) study shows there are an estimated two million non-resident fathers.

One young couple had a unique experience of swapping around the traditional roles for the very early part of parenting. The father showing the new mum what to do as he already had the knowledge from his previous child.

58% of fathers of babies do not see being the breadwinner as the most important aspect of being a father (Harker, L et al 2006)

“My dad was out at 7 and home by 7 and by then I was in bed. My dad loved me but I don’t want to be like that. I love being involved at home with my daughter. I don’t really care about the money I mean you need a certain amount of money to survive, but I don’t want to work 100 hours a week just to do better in the company. I’d rather do alright in life and spend more time at home. I think you miss out on a lot going to work or going out with your mates” 21 year old step father of one and father to be (23).

The young fathers also felt the need to be validated in their roles as fathers. Many felt that they were not recognised as being significant, especially in services for children and families.
Cycle of exclusion

“It was definitely life changing”
20 year old father of three (13)

This was a popular comment made by many of the young fathers.

For some young men the fatherhood experience can move from a positive ‘life changing’ experience to a repeat of a process of exclusion experienced many times in their lives already. As Mark Osborn (2007) explains in his thesis “Being There- Young Men’s Experiences and Perceptions on Becoming a Father”:

“The young fathers in this research described recurrent experiences of social exclusion. These repeated experiences revealed a pattern, or cycle, of exclusion which was found to impact on subsequent relationships and their ability to interact with others. The respondents identified that becoming a father could be a turning point in their lives in which they could break their cycle of exclusion. However, exclusion experienced as a result of becoming a father continued and reinforced that pattern.” (Osborn, 2007)

Wayne Cross (2009) a practitioner from the White Gold project agreed that he also had witnessed this cycle of exclusion in his professional experience.

“The majority are offenders or have offended. So there is that pattern of; neglect at home, domestic violence, offending, young parent.”

Benefits for the mother

A young father involved in the parenting is beneficial to the Young Mum. It is linked with lower parenting stress and depression in Mums (Berrington et al 2005, Fisher et al 2006, Kalil et al 2005, Fathers Direct 2007)

“The presence of a partner is a key factor affecting the relationship between young motherhood and behavioral difficulties in the child. The effect is mediated via the poorer mental health of women who do not have a stable partnership” (Berrington et al, 2005, Fatherhood Institute 2008)).

Father’s rights

Non-resident fathers talked about their sense of powerlessness in regards to their children. This was frequently when referring to access to their children.

“I don’t think Dads have got any rights. I think it should be fifty fifty on who has the children.

She says you can see them when I say, I don’t think that’s fair.” 21 year old father of one and step-father (19)

On the two occasions when supervised access had been agreed, both young fathers felt that this would be ‘supervised’ by an independent person. On both occasions it was the mother of their child/children.

For one this proved difficult because the visits were at the mums new residence. Her new partner would be there and the children would also call him dad. This he says was the reason he stopped the visits.

The other one found it strange that they would make the Mum the one who supervised the visits as the reason they split up was because they ‘always argued’. So when the visits happened, they always argued. He was also expecting an independent person to be the supervisee. He had asked various professionals to fill this role, as he was at a stage of desperation. At the time of the interview he was explaining that he felt that
if nothing changed that he would walk away “I just want to see my daughter on my own for once, even if it was her Mum or my mum there” (26)

Another young father explained that after he left the mother of his first child “she was quite bitter so she stopped all access” (25). He then had to go to court which involved paying the legal fees because he had a well paid job at the time. “It cost a lot of money to see her” and it also took six months. The young father had to attend court on three separate occasions because the Mum made several accusations which the father then had to prove were false. He now has a court order which entitles him to access and said “I would do it all again, it is so worth it”.

Not asking for help
Gender specific methods of dealing with emotions and societal expectations of ‘how to be a man’ perpetuates the strong cultural norm of a man not asking for help.

Barnes et al (2008) in their first year of the Nurse-Family Partnership Programme found that young fathers “expect not to have any service provision and would not ask for help”

“Men react differently to the offer of support than women” 25 year old father of one (18)

“It takes a lot for a young man to ask for help in the first place” Practitioner from Milton Keynes Young Fathers project

The higher rates of suicide among young men can be seen as an indicator of this

“A worrying recent trend is the increasing rate of suicide among younger men (a trend not seen among young women). The majority of these men have not asked for help before their deaths. The reasons why the number of men taking their own lives has risen in recent years are far from clear. All of the proposed explanations share a common feature - the changing role of men in society.” (Mulkolland, C, 2005)

This then implies that young fathers not only need a service specifically for them, but that practitioners may have to go and get them.

Gatekeepers to the children
Three of the young fathers mentioned that they felt uncomfortable with the fact that the Mums are essentially gatekeepers to the children. For the non-resident fathers this was a normal part of their fatherhood experience. One felt his daughter was used as a weapon against him. The only non-resident father not experiencing this had a court order for access.

However, as one concerned father said, “it is always going to be easier for the father to walk.”
Findings part two

Services

Local services
There are many services available for parents in St Blazey and throughout Cornwall. These are provided by a range of organisations and projects in different settings across the county. In the St Blazey area there are:

- Pre-school Playgroups
- Nurseries
- A Community centre
- A youth and children’s centre- which offers a young mums group, an under ones and under twos club along with a full program to offer parents and families.
- Parent and toddler groups
- Two GP surgeries and a health centres offering ante-natal and other classes (such as paediatric first aid)
- Health visitors
- Mid-wives
- Community Development Workers
- Youth Workers

Information
There is now a wealth of information for parents of all ages available from the places mentioned above and also through, books, the internet and by phone. A good example of this is the Family Information Service, where information about family related subjects is collected and available through a phone call or can be accessed through their website. Some information, such as the maternity packs are physically given to mums.

It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that there were sufficient services and information available for parents and carers.

Young fathers do not access services
However, this wide range of local service is rarely accessed by young fathers.

It’s often hard to get young dads to come to the surgery, as GP Julian Spinks explains:

“Young men have always been the most difficult group to get into a surgery.”

Health workers have found that young dads are happy to go to the pub to talk about their parenting issues.

But it’s a different story when you try to bring them over to a family centre to chat.

With a large number of teenagers starting families early, he knows how important it is to engage young fathers in their children’s health care.

“Odds on I get young mums coming in on their own - very rarely I'll get a father coming along too.” (BBC, 2005)

Other than the Midwife and Health Visitor services none of the young fathers had accessed a service related to families or children.

Young fathers experiences of services
Some of the findings from the Bristol University study ‘The Transition to Fatherhood in Young Men: influences on commitment’ correspond with experiences of young fathers in this research.

- Young men often felt excluded from involvement with ante-natal and post-natal care by health service professionals.
- Health care professionals often knew little about the fathers, did not see them as central to their task, and felt they lacked the skills to engage with men. (Quinton et al 2004)
Maternity services

“My wife was all wired up after my son was born and no-one told me why” 22 year old step father and father (14)

“All the professionals speak to the Mum. It makes you feel excluded and it’s annoying. Even at the birth. I was pushed to the side and no-one told me what was going on. I even mentioned it to my mate who was there with me. It was my first child and I would have liked to know what was going on and for someone to tell me”. 20 year old father of one (3)

“You expect that the attention will be on the Mum but there was one time the midwife was that rude that [mums name] actually commented on it after she left” 25 year old father of one (18)

“Some of them [Health Visitors] were perfect it’s just the way one of them come across as rude and arrogant. But we just put up and shut up.” 22 year old father of two (25)

“With the Health Visitor you feel like you’re being left out, I don’t mind, cause they just concentrate on mum and baby.” 21 year old father of one (24)

Case study:
22 year old step-father and father (14)

One young father tackled his wife’s post-natal depression without any support.

He realised something ‘wasn’t right’ but had no idea who to ask or were to get any information from.

He was unable to see the health visitor due to work commitments but hoped that she would be picking up on the signs he was witnessing. During their interview the Mum spoke openly about how her husband had on one occasion ‘talked her down’ from a particularly stressful experience and as she put it “with no help and no medical experience” When nothing changed he took it upon himself to do some internet research. He soon came to the conclusion that his wife had post-natal depression. He then discussed this with his wife, she agreed but also explained that she had been falsely filling out the post-natal depression test (E.P.D.S Questionnaire) that Health Visitors are obliged to carry out on there home visits. She felt that it was very easy to say what they wanted to hear. Having discussed it they both worked together at trying to tackle it. The mum filled out the test honestly and moved from 3 out of 30 to a 28. This started the process within the health service of dealing with it.

The young father also described how his manager, at work, disputed the existence of post-natal depressions as an illness to the extent he spoke to a friend who was a doctor. Fortunately, the doctor friend explained the severity of post-natal depression.

“When it was then officially diagnosed and then treated, even though I spotted it and we were and still are dealing with it, to this day no one has ever asked me about it.”
One young father felt very differently about Health Service provision.

“I had a really positive experience, the Health Visitors came every week during the post-natal stage and then to the family conference. Some are grumpy, but dads don’t know how to talk to them. You are scared of talking to them, thinking that they are going to take your kids away. You can’t relax around them like you can a Youth Worker. You tell them what they want to hear. It’s like people think they are going to judge you if you have a messy house. That’s how I felt in the beginning, but because I got to know them I realised that they are here to help. Their job is to make sure the children are OK and that won’t judge you. They were brilliant and I’m not sure what we would have done without them” 20 year old father of three (13)

Most of the young fathers felt that health professionals ‘were there for the Mum and the baby’ which came with an apparent understanding of the professionals priorities. They definitely felt on the periphery of the experiences but not enough to warrant strong negative comments.

The Department of Health recognises the importance of engaging young fathers in their National Service Framework (2004).

5.6 Involvement of prospective and new fathers in a child’s life is extremely important for maximising the life-long well-being and outcomes of the child (regardless of whether the father is resident or not). Pregnancy and birth are the first major opportunities to engage fathers in the appropriate care and upbringing of their children.

5.7 Young men who become fathers may also come from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. A positive relationship with the young woman during pregnancy is a key predictor of the father’s involvement with his child in the early years. Maternity services can support this relationship through involving and encouraging young fathers but health professionals may know little about teenage fathers and may lack the skills to engage with them.

However, that is not always easy, in the last few years Health Visitors across the country, including Cornwall, have found themselves operating at, what is termed, ‘Crisis Levels’. In many circumstances Health Visitors find they can only offer the minimal service that is required.

There is a reluctance to train new health visitors because of the expense of doing so. This short term approach is having a significant impact on their work.

The Family and Parenting Institute chief executive, Mary MacLeod, says the situation is of great concern.

“We have been in contact with health visitors who are seriously worried that children are being put at risk because they do not routinely visit all families more than once,” she explains.

“It is easy to miss vulnerable parents suffering with post-natal depression or from domestic violence when you have not built up a relationship with them ... Of particular concern is that health visitors may not have the time to contact and visit families who move into their area and they remain a totally unknown quantity - and get no service.” (Flanagan, A, 2008)

It must also be acknowledged that the midwifery profession is no different, under resourced and overstretched. These are the professionals that a key to parenting work being effective.
Social Care

Four of the young fathers that were involved in the research had some involvement with Social Care. Two of those had the possibility of their children being put into full-time care. Both were unhappy about this as an option. One of them had unfortunate circumstances which lead to concerns from Social Care the other had caused the situation through his actions.

The first young father found the process hard to understand. He had been the main carer since his child’s birth and had been commended on how well he was doing. In a conversation he had with the researcher he was able to explain what he found frustrating about the situation, what his aspirations were for him and his son and that ‘my child is my number one priority’. (15)

The two other young fathers had matching experiences; this was of interest due to them being in separate counties as this suggests a certain consistency with Social Care. During the analysis of their experiences the researcher realised they had even made the same comment! Both young fathers had been made sole carers of their child. They both understood why Social Care had been involved with the mums but both remarked how,

“The mum had five workers and no-one was speaking to me. No one asked me how I felt about the situation or even how I was doing. It was only the week before I had custody that someone came to speak to me” (3 & 27)

Children’s centres

None of the young fathers interviewed had been to a Children’s Centre. Two of those interviewed lived four hundred meters away from one. When one was asked if he knew of it he replied “I’ve been given some leaflets, but I won’t go it’ll probably be full of middle aged parents, just like the school” (23)

Many of the organisations who campaign for inclusive fathers work explain the importance of making places ‘father friendly’. This can include putting up posters with positive images of fathers, choosing male friendly colours and including the term ‘father’ or ‘dad’ specifically in any publicity for services and projects that they can use.

These details can make a place more inviting once they are through the door. However, the issue is getting them through the door.

Some of the practitioners who work with young fathers have found that after building a relationship with a young father they have had great success in getting them into and using Children Centres.
So why are they not accessing them?

This wide range of negative experiences and barriers to using services left the researcher very sure that they came from a deeply embedded cultural norm within public sector professionals of unintentionally disregarding young fathers as being relevant in their children’s needs, therefore not recognising them as a significant voice. Young fathers who are active in taking up ‘parent’ services are regularly seen as either a novelty item “ahh, bless him” or viewed with suspicion as a potential threat.

“Professionals are continuing to juggle with constructions of the father as ‘risk vs. the father as a resource’” (Featherstone 2001)

Young Parents services are habitually focused on young mothers, if young fathers do attend these services they can find themselves isolated and unable to relate with the group. When professionals use the terms ‘parents’ and ‘family’ the reality is often very different. Bolting on the ‘dads’ term to a service when it is not father friendly can, in fact, be counter productive. It reinforces fathers’ perceptions of a ‘closed shop’; this is accentuated when the father is younger.

“Like Polkyth [a local leisure centre], they have that session there and it’s all Mums, maybe one dad every now and then and twenty mums and you look at him and think, no way.” 21 year old step father and father to be (23)

Mums accessing services for their children has a long history and is a societal norm, if not a global norm. Recognising this is crucial when looking at services for young fathers.

Young fathers who are looking for support and information about being a father are part of a quiet revolution. They are breaking the mould and need to be supported to do so, especially as it not seen as a traditionally masculine role.

These combinations are what contributes to young fathers being termed ‘hard to reach’

The Red Knob company is a health education resources, training and consultancy company that have an approach that engages with ‘hard to reach’ young men and as an organisation they are quite explicit about what is required.

“Yes, we do want young men to be able to talk about sex and relationships and that this should be a prime requisite for work with young men; we also need to recognise that sometimes this needs to be on their terms and not just ours as professionals as we have a target to meet, an ethical stance to uphold - either organisational or individual, or that they are ‘too hard to reach’. No one should be hard to reach if the correct approach is applied.” The Red Knob (2009)

Young father’s projects regularly demonstrate that engaging these ‘hard to reach’ young men is also about going out and finding them. The research discovered this as young dads had to be actively searched for but when found were happy to engage. This ‘hard to reach issue’ could be accentuated when offering a service that has previously never existed and would not have been taken up even thirty years ago.

Through the research twenty eight successful young fathers projects were discovered, none of these exist in Cornwall

The importance of working with fathers

As described in the introduction, paternal involvement is important because of the unique input fathers add to children’s development and the family as a whole.

Father involvement is changing with the evolving twenty first century father. These fathers have a significant part to play in the development and well being of their child
Research with fathers has identified a list of benefits for children with paternal involvement:

- It is related to higher levels of educational attainment
- Children are less likely to become involved in adolescent delinquency and involvement with the police
- It protects against psychological maladjustment in separated families
- It is associated with fewer emotional and behavioural problems
- It is associated with reported satisfactory relationships in adult life
- It is associated with positive parent and child relationships during Adolescence (Flouri and Buchanan, 2004; Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera, 1999).

This is also true for non resident fathers as evidence suggests that when there is close and positive contact with both parents it is far more beneficial for the child.

These positive outcomes also offer long term economic benefits that can be offset against the investment in early intervention and preventative services for parents.

It is important to acknowledge that father involvement is not always positive. There is an association with negative outcomes for children such as copied behaviour which can be:

- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Domestic violence
- Poor parenting models
- Anti-social behaviours

DfES (2006)

However, this is less likely if targeted work is provided for this group.

There is also some ‘common sense’ thinking that can be applied about working with fathers. They are one half of the whole that creates a child so in order to increase the positive outcomes for the family, as a whole, services need to be available and accessible to all of them as one unit or as individuals.
Saturdads
Saturdads is a successful father's project based in a variety of locations in Cornwall. Using a model similar to other projects across the UK, Ian Parsons and his team are very successful in engaging fathers and provide a much needed and well used service. However, by their own admission, Saturdads do not get teenage fathers attending but sometimes have fathers in their twenties join them. A practitioner from a young father’s project in Milton Keynes explains his experience of attending such a project.

“I visited it three times and a young dad turned up the first week and then never came back. The fathers seemed to be an established group of friends and the young dad couldn’t communicate with them as he had little in common with them” Hayden Tennant, Boys and Young Men’s Worker, Sexual Health Outreach and Education, Brook (2009)

A similar project in Bideford, North Devon, organised by Rob Cannicot has managed to combine the both. Rob runs the Young Fathers Network and young fathers from this project then feed into the North Devon father’s projects. This combination can get him sixty plus fathers in the Children’s Centre, especially if it’s a Saturday when there are free bacon sandwiches!

Services for young fathers projects
These are projects whose remit is young fathers only. Young fathers are classed as those under twenty five years of age who have a father role.

These became the main area of focus for the research.

This involved the combination of the two main methods of data collection:
- Documentary research, which involved the analysis of previous research and literature from established projects.
- Interviews, with young fathers and practitioners. The practitioners were from young father’s projects or from projects that had contact with young fathers.

Consultation with potential clients and other related professionals is a crucial part of developing a service that will be used. It is in effect the principal element of a user lead service and is important if young fathers want to be validated and essentially ‘own’ the service. This should be a standard part of any public service and this approach is also effective in engaging ‘hard to reach groups’. This can sometimes be uncomfortable for professionals who can easily become ‘set in their ways’ of working

These are some of the significant findings from this part of the research.

It needs to be a one to one approach
The hard evidence for this approach working locally is this research. Within eight weeks, twenty six young fathers were met in a one to one setting for their interviews. This is of huge significance when looking at a group termed ‘hard to reach’ as the evidence demonstrates that this is not true but shows that traditional
approaches by services are not effective in engaging these young men.

Practitioners who the researcher spoke to reinforced this.

“The group didn’t work, they knew each other which was the only reason there was a group. But when they wanted to talk about the more personal stuff, even as friends, they wanted a one to one not a group situation. They were able to open up more in one to one and timetabling for a group was hard as well”

You need to have weekly visits to young dads, and these could go on for weeks & weeks & weeks, anything up to 2 years”

Hayden Tennant, Boys and Young Men’s Worker, Sexual Health Outreach and Education, Brook (2009)

“Another key priority was building one to one relationships over a period of time, and building up a bond of trust. Start from this premise. You can then filter off young dads into the group if it is fitting.” Andy Wood, Practitioner from MAP, Norwich (2009)

“Has to be one to one work to start off with and then assessing them for when they are ready to go into a group. This can vary and often depends on the needs. If they have high needs it will take longer. I always make the initial meeting a one to one where they want to meet. You have to build that relationship with them” John May, Specialist Learning Mentor (School Age Fathers)

Health Initiatives and Well-being team East Leeds. (2009)

“One to one work is seen as vital for younger dads........The development worker often visits young fathers at home to introduce them to the project” Davies, J (2004)

“I don’t know about a group cause being a young dad I wouldn’t want to be in a group, I’d like more one to one even if it was by the phone. I wouldn’t want people to know where I think I’m going wrong, but that’s just me personally”

22 year old step-father and father (22)

“I don’t think I would use a one to one worker now I’m more experienced, but for a first time Dad I think it would be great. It would keep the young dads on board then they wouldn’t get scared and run off.” 22 year old step father and father to be (23)

“A one to one worker would have helped me during my split with the mum and during the mediation. I could’ve done with someone to talk to” 19 year old father of three (12)

“One to one? brilliant. Everybody would like this. A person would open up. Just someone to listen to me” 19 year old father of three (13)

“It would be good if a guy came around, and as long as he wasn’t arrogant. If he came around and said this is what’s going to happen, this is what you should be doing, you know helping you get through it. If you need me here’s my number, you know that sort of thing, to guide you a bit more. Not telling you as such, just like explaining what to expect” 24 year old father of one (17)

“One to one I think it would be better for a home visit, like you’re here in my house I don’t feel on edge, if we were somewhere else I might. That would be fine but I think you need to build up the relationship as well. I think that the health visitor style would be good for the one to one worker” 21 year old father to be (1)

“I probably wouldn’t use a one to one worker” 18 year old father to be (5)

“I don’t like one to one’s and stuff like that. I used to have a one to one Youth Offending Team worker and I didn’t like that” 20 year old father of one (16)

A young fathers group:

“You have to be realistic in that sometimes you will have a group of young men who function really well within that setting, you
may have one or two, or you may go for weeks without anyone in the group. You continue it with that in mind, knowing that part of the work will be taken up, knowing it’s not always full.” Andy Wood, Practitioner from MAP, Norwich (2009)

“We had a peer support group that worked well. Young fathers to be would get a chance to hold a baby, often for the first time”

“Somewhere you can have all the dads together with their babies. Share and learn off each other really.
I would want to have my kid with me as it’s important to see how each and every dad handles their’s differently.
Showing what your like with your babies is a good way to learn”. 19 year old father of one (20)

“I would have liked support from other parents, mums or dads, someone might have been in a similar situation as me.” 22 year old Step-father and father of one (19)

“The group thing I wouldn’t do, I find it hard to speak to other people, we’ve had loads of leaflets before about group things, I wouldn’t go because I don’t know anybody and when I think about talking to people I worry about what they will think about me” 23 year old father of one and father to be (2)

“I do think the group sounds good in theory, I don’t know what the lads would be like, if they would turn up, they’d say they’d go and then they’d be like well I dunno.
I wouldn’t mind talking in a group. I don’t think younger ones would turn up.
I think if you had older dads in the group with the younger dads they can talk and share experiences.” 22 year old step-father and father to be (23)

“I wouldn’t go a group I don’t think. It would have been nice to know what is going to happen to her, you know why we were falling out. It would have been nice knowing what to do.
I don’t like going in to a room where I don’t know people, I won’t speak to them.”
21 year old father of one (6)

Both one to one and a group:

“One to one would be better. I’m still a bit agoraphobic so a group would do my head in.
But I think for dads a combination of the both would be good” 23 year old young father of one (3)

“Run both schemes and offer them both and which ever is the most successful you go with” 24 year old father of one (17)

“Have both so you could have a group running and then everyone can go in and have a one to one” 20 year old father of one (11)

“The combination would be good. One to one is good it’s been proven to be good for developmental purposes any way. At the same time if it’s a group of other young dads they can talk amongst themselves and come up with ideas.
Yes I would, I would be really interested in the group as I would be interested in listening to other guys, just seeing what their worries and concerns were as a group, to see if they matched yours.” 21 year old father to be (1)

**Dads training days:**

This was an idea suggested by the researcher during the interviews, because of the lack of young parents attending ante-natal classes.

“I think getting some parenting skills would be great. A days training, hands on, look at different parts of what needs to be done, over a day, all get together have a laugh. I would love to be more involved. It would be great to recommend to my wife the type of bottle my son could use” 22 year old step father and father (14)

“Dads training days would work really well, it’s going to help everyone. I would have gone to that.” 19 year old father of one (20)

“A three day course, which is voluntary, run by a bloke that would include changing nappies, emergency first aid, the temperature of bottles” 19 year old father of one (9)

“I went to one of those ante-natal classes. I felt a bit awkward, I mean it wasn’t like people my age and we are all in a group. I didn’t want to speak up because I thought they would laugh at me. If it was other parents my age I probably would go” 23 year old father of one and father to be (2)

“Dads training days like the ante-natal for the girls. I didn’t want to go to that where there are a load of girls going [mimicking heavy breathing] I don’t wanna go there.

I think a load of blokes together having a laugh, you wouldn’t feel so out of place. That’s a good idea- very good. I think it would show your girlfriend that you’re taking it seriously. It would make you bond with your partner and with your child more and quicker. I think it’s a great idea especially round here [St Blazey] there’s loads of young parents.” 24 year old father of one (17)

“I get really worried about hurting them [the baby] I think that’s a really good idea” 22 year old step-father and father to be (23)

There were nine young men who felt that they were prepared for looking after their baby. When this was investigated further, all of them had previous experience with children this had been their siblings, nephews or nieces.

One young father had been told all about what would happen during pregnancies by his mum when he was eighteen. After his partner fell pregnant his mum went through it with him again.

When one of the WILD young mum groups heard this, they suggested mums like themselves get training on how to have this discussion with their sons.

**Days out:**

“I would love day trips out or arts and crafts activities” 22 year old step father and father (14)

“I like the idea of trips out. It’s getting them out there.” 19 year old father of one (9)

**Days out with the family:**

“It would be awesome to do some of the trips together. It would be really good.

It would be a really good way to meet other couples with children.” 19 year old father of one (20)

When discussing the idea of days out together as young fathers with their children, one young father suggested the idea of trips out with their partners. The researcher’s initial reaction was concern because it could isolate non-resident fathers but realised if this was going to be truly ‘user lead’ then it needed to be included as part of a larger offer of provision. For the young fathers with partners this was a popular idea.
Dads packs:
This would be similar to the maternity pack given out to mums through the Midwife. This pack is theoretically for both mothers and fathers but is associated with mums as the content and even the design of the bags is female biased.

The idea behind a Dads pack is two fold:
1. It is a tool to get valuable information out to young fathers
2. It validates the role of the father. Through being available it says “you are important and valued”.

One young father made the point that if these packs became a reality, he would not have received one from the midwife as he was non-resident and not involved since conception. If they were used they would have to be universally available through all relevant services. This would include making organisations aware they existed and their importance to young fathers.

Since the start of the research several ‘Dads packs’ have been identified from various different organisations deciding on which one to use would be something a young father’s focus group would be involved in.

“A dads pack would have been really useful”
19 year old father of one (20)

“I would have loved that I enjoyed going through the bounty pack, but that was for Mum. Just the basics is what needs to be in there. Get some freebies in there”
22 year old father of two (25)

“Dads pack- I think that would work. Pre-birth”
20 year old father of one (16)

“It might make them feel valued. It will let them know that, because there is some literature out there about them”
25 year old father of one (18)

“A pack would definitely be a good idea”
23 year old father of one (2)

“I do think short and simple for blokes. I think the more you get dads involved the better, you need to get them excited about being dad. If they can get more information they will understand about what is happening because 9 months is a long time. You could have a different pack for different stages”. 22 year old step-father and father to be (23)

Venues:
“The MAP Young Fathers project in Norwich is based at a young persons drop in an advice and counselling centre. This was a huge advantage for me. Having a young people friendly centre that was already established and recognised by young people as a space that they could go. Most young fathers have never heard about Children’s Centres. But I have persuaded some to access their nearest one. Once again, young fathers need to feel welcome and that they can develop a trusting relationship with a worker if they are to engage fully.” Andy Wood Practitioner from MAP, Norwich (2009)

During the interviews suggestions for a venue for meeting was asked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th>How many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scout hut</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penrice Maternity centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere cozy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere sheltered in case it rains</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t know</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“A full-time post is really important to a project like this, one to one’s, paperwork, setting up groups, programme planning, looking for funding, the sheer investment of time for these young dads.” Andy Wood Practitioner from MAP, Norwich (2009)

“It needs to be a stand alone job, not attached to another role” Hayden Tennant, Boys and Young Men’s Worker, Sexual Health Outreach and Education, Brook (2009)

“Having a high profile has been important as they know you’re the man to talk to. Make yourself known – to everyone” John May. Specialist Learning Mentor (School Age Fathers) Health Initiatives and Well-being team East Leeds. (2009)

“It would have to be someone who has been through the situation. People can get trained up but until you’ve been in a situation no theoretical training is ever going to prepare you. I would feel loads better if I know the person I’m speaking to has experienced it rather then learnt about it.” 22 year old step-father and father of one (22)

Five other young fathers referred to the worker as being male. Due to the reliability of interviews as a method of data collection, this can be questioned due to the interviewer being male.

Fathers Direct do recommend at least one male worker for any fathers work. (Fathers Direct, 2006)

**Funding:**

Funding was a significant issue with young father’s practitioners. All cited it as being one of the main pressures of their roles. One explained:

“There is a missing link in the chain. The need is identified, their needs are identified, often the way of working is fairly clear but it seems to miss being actioned or anything happening.” Hayden Tennant, Boys and Young Men’s Worker, Sexual Health Outreach and Education, Brook (2009). He explained that he had heard similar experiences at a conference about young fathers.

The researcher also found that five of the projects that he tried to contact had shut down. Some through practitioners moving on and not being replaced, the reasons for the others were not known.

This suggests that young father’s projects are hard to continue in the long-term.

**Numbers of young fathers:**

As a guide the table below shows some of the numbers that successful projects have worked with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Location</th>
<th>Type of Support Provided</th>
<th>Number of Participants (As of Present Time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAP Norwich</td>
<td>Young people drop in</td>
<td>170 in 5 years (34 a year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes Young Fathers project</td>
<td>Young people drop in</td>
<td>25 at present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Devon Young Fathers Network</td>
<td>One to one support and group</td>
<td>30 at present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Health Initiatives team Education Leeds</td>
<td>One to one support and group</td>
<td>20 (7 in the group) at present time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restormel Family Services young fathers research</td>
<td>One to one research</td>
<td>26 in 2 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAP and the Young Fathers Network had high numbers of non-resident fathers using their services, 50-70% of their client group. They made up 31% of the research sample group, this implies that with a service to offer there would be an increase in non-resident young fathers making contact.

**Issues that might be dealt with:**

List of things that young fathers in this research were asking for help with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money management</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with mum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better access to their children</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postnatal support</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking basic meals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone to speak to</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone there for advice and support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for young couples</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for couples</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person for supervising visit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were many more significant and relevant topics that were discovered during this research that could not be included.

However, as a possible guide, these are the issues that MAP in Norwich helped to address through their young fathers project (the figures represent the number of dads this involved):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing uncertainties about paternity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring parental responsibility</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain or regain contact with child</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain and develop a positive relationship with child</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining contact with child</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain and develop a positive relationship with child</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to maintain, re-establish working relationship with babies mum</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase parenting capacity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase ability to provide practical including financial support for child</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where identified as ‘in need’ (s.17 Children Act), increase understanding of and willingness to co operate with the process and make practical use of support provided

Where child identified as ‘at risk’, (s43 Children’s Act), to increase understanding of the reasons for decision and foster willingness to cooperate and make necessary changes to reduce risk

Where appropriate gain knowledge of and access to services supporting parenting (including advice on benefits, housing, work and training)

Increase ability to be able to constructively challenge any preconceptions on the part of professional or others which may inhibit involvement

Increase personal confidence and knowledge to address any of the above

Advice and support for step parenting

Provide support for loss of a child (through death or adoption)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where identified as ‘in need’ (s.17 Children Act)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where child identified as ‘at risk’, (s43 Children’s Act)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where appropriate gain knowledge of and access to services supporting parenting (including advice on benefits, housing, work and training)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase ability to be able to constructively challenge any preconceptions on the part of professional or others which may inhibit involvement</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase personal confidence and knowledge to address any of the above</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice and support for step parenting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide support for loss of a child (through death or adoption)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

- Young Fathers are asking for help, support and information.
- Young fathers feel they do not get recognised in their role and this is reinforced by the services they encounter or those they do not.
- They play a significant role in their child’s development and their future. They are entitled to a service that meets their needs.
- Father’s roles are changing and twenty first century dads need support in their quiet revolution.
- That there is a real need for a young father’s service or project in Cornwall. It is not enough that young men only receive help with their parenting when in prison.
- The lack of a young fathers service, demonstrates a significant gap in service provision something highlighted by local practitioners.
- If a service becomes available it needs to promote the positive aspects of young fathers to the wider community.
- There needs to be young fathers involved in consultation around all matters that involve them. This will help make services inclusive.
- Services, such as health, need to engage with and validate young father’s positions and encourage them in their roles.
- Young fathers are often teenage parents and need to be more actively involved with teenage pregnancy strategies.
- That this research was necessary as part of a localised analysis of need. It
justifies itself by identifying the need and providing essential insights into setting up a local service or project.

- It makes economic sense. The long term outcomes produced by good quality family involvement by fathers (and mothers) can be offset against the financial costs to society brought about through the range of negative outcomes that occur without this positive parent involvement.

**Service provision**

- It has to be user lead with ongoing consultation as an integral part of the practice.
- The service is for the young fathers, but it is always about the child/children and what can be done to support and help them.
- It needs to be long-term with realistic targets and effective methods of recording outcomes and the journey to these outcomes.

In regards to services there is a need to be strategic, pragmatic and not ‘re-invent the wheel’. Examples of this could be:

1. Dads training days. Ante-natal classes for young men only. Provided by the Health service,
2. Information about how many Young Fathers there are in Cornwall. Organisations ask service users, Are you a father?
3. Days out for families. Use existing services, getting the right information to the right people.
4. In the maternity unit when important information is given to mum, do it when the father is around.
5. With the Health Visitor crisis. Provide ‘easy to access’ information to young fathers to help identify signs of post-natal depression with a simple route on how to raise their concerns and what to do. This is also relevant for non-resident young fathers if they still have contact with the mum. This could be done through the Dads pack or a young fathers worker.

**Best practice for services for young fathers in St Blazey.**

A pictorial model has been used to demonstrate this. It uses the ‘turning the curve’ idea and presents three options. It is a model that can be used from a small local area, to a parish, county or at national level. For this research it is based around the St Blazey parish.

**The first option.**

This is the minimum required to make an impact.

It is based on information:

1. **Collecting information about young fathers**
   A key issue has been information about young fathers. There is a real need to start the collection of hard quantitative data about young fathers. The primary aim is to get basic information; how many and where in the county.
   Organisations who come into contact with young men need to ask early on if they are a parent.
   Data protection would prevent this being passed on to any central data base.
   There are, in Cornwall, service level agreements around information sharing and these need to be used.
   There is a long term aim for information from all relevant agencies being shared and this should include information about young fathers (but only if the question is asked!).
2. Getting information out to young fathers
What has become apparent is that young fathers need information and validation of their father role and status. The information is out there but they are not accessing it.
The idea of a ‘dads pack’ pre-birth has been popular with those interviewed. Pre-birth would require the midwives to do this perhaps on the ‘book in visit’.

This would:
- Help, as tool, to bring up the father discussion.
- Validate the father as being part of the process
- Help pass on some valuable information.

The packs would be simple with not too much in. They would also need to be available in other organisations for those young fathers not involved with mum from the babies conception. This would be the minimum required to have some effect and on their own would have some impact but would be more effective if combined with one to one work.

The second option
This is the more effective option but has greater cost implications as it requires a full-time post.

The young fathers interviewed have indicated they would engage with a practitioner who worked with them on a one to one basis. This has been proved to be effective in engaging young fathers and is seen by practitioners as crucial. The referrals would come through all agencies that have contact with young fathers. The process would be:
1. Meet and build the relationship
2. Make an assessment of need. This would help define a time frame and what work needed to be done
3. Refer/signpost on to other services and/or continue to support one to one if appropriate.

This would ideally be combined with the previous option.

What needs to be recognised within this one to one role is the high fuel costs if the remit moves from being the immediate local area. A county remit is not unrealistic but fuel costs would become a significant financial outgoing.

The third option
This would be the most effective and would involve the previous two options plus the active development of:
1. Dads training days. Involving the young fathers in the development and the content of these.
2. A peer mentoring service. This requires time and good planning. Poor peer mentoring can be ineffective and have a negative impact on those involved. Local schools have already stated an interest in this.
3. A young fathers group. This would be user led and could be in a variety of formats.

An essential with all of these is the promotion through relevant organisations of these services. They provided a substantial amount of young fathers for the research and networking combined with actively ‘getting out there’ and raising the awareness of the need for young fathers work should aid young fathers accessing these services.
Final conclusions

Young fathers work is about:

- Young people being parents
- The wellbeing of their children
- Positive families

Young fathers work is starting to be recognised as necessary. What needs to be carefully monitored is that there is not a ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’ scenario with young mums work and services. This important work needs to be continued and supported.

Young Fathers work is essentially about the long term aims for the families, parents and children which require quality partnerships and networks to keep costs lower and provide a sustainable service.

Young fathers work in Cornwall is an equality issue. Using Thompsons (1997) P.C.S. model young fathers are discriminated against at a personal, cultural (within services) and societal level. This is accentuated for young fathers in Cornwall by a lack of any provision.

Young fathers work offers a unique opportunity of a bridge to those termed ‘hard to reach’. It provides a chance to engage with young men around a subject they ‘love’ and this creates a positive dynamic between them and the professional. It counteracts possible negativity felt towards professionals, especially if the young fathers have experienced an ongoing cycle of exclusion. If the positive outcomes for the young fathers and their child are made clear and the work is effective it can make a significant difference in re-engaging young men who often ‘slip through the net’.

From the Children’s Act 2004 to the Cornwall Parenting Strategy, parenting and supporting parenting is acknowledged as crucial to improving children’s lives. With this comes a level of duty to provide effective parent services, however, the young fathers in this research are not using these services that they are entitled to. This implies a county wide issue that needs to be addressed.

In the long-term when ‘father’ issues are properly addressed and services are genuinely ‘inclusive’ the need for father specific projects should diminish and become very specific.
Model of best practice for young fathers work

**Short term**

**Minimum needed** cheapest option

**Dads Packs**
- Small amount of info
- Given out at 1st Midwife visit or by organisations e.g. connexions/White Gold
- At young dads places e.g. sport halls, pubs.

**Parent Friendly Forms**
- All organisations to ask “Are you a parent?” On enrolment.
- Agreements between organisations to show this information.

**Future/Long term**

**Ideal needed** most expensive

**Group**
- Regular group
- Once a month
- Regular trips
- With children & mums (F.S.)

**Group support**
- Dad’s Unite

**Peer mentoring**
1. Within a group Dad with Dads
2. Within school/project/centre settings

**Positive role modelling & Reality of fatherhood**

**Dads training days**
1 Day, hands on, intensive, fun and to include: how to play The Law – legal rights
Getting work – CV’s
First aid
Mums – during and after pregnancy
Parenting skills

**Referrals**

- Services for young people
- Young Fathers Self-Referrals & Young Father Worker Referrals
- Services for families
- Services for adults

**Services for young people**

**Self-Referrals & Young Father Worker Referrals**

**Health**

**Services for adults**

**Services for families**

**Group**

**Regular group**

**Once a month**

**Regular trips**

**With children & mums (F.S.)**

**Parent Friendly Forms**

- All organisations to ask “Are you a parent?” On enrolment.
- Agreements between organisations to show this information.

**Services for adults**

**Services for families**

**Young Fathers Worker**
One to One work – home/preferred visits
1. Meet and build relationships
2. Assessment of needs
3. Refer/signpost/continue
4. Review

**Dads Packs**
- Small amount of info
- Given out at 1st Midwife visit or by organisations e.g. connexions/White Gold
- At young dads places e.g. sport halls, pubs.
Appendices

Appendices 1

Under 18 conceptions data for LAD1 and LAD2 (all LAs including county districts), 1998-00, 2001-03, 2004-06

Version: 28.04.08

N.B. Rates are per 1000 female population aged 15-17.
Counts for City of London and Isles of Scilly have been combined with those for Hackney LB and Penwith CD respectively.
2004-06 data are provisional
Rates for 2001-2003 were rebased in November 2007 using revised population estimates (August 2007)
Sources: Office for National Statistics and Teenage Pregnancy Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of usual residence</th>
<th>1998-00</th>
<th>2001-03</th>
<th>2004-06</th>
<th>% change in rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>% leading to abortion</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>127,496</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>125,103</td>
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<td>England</td>
<td>119,036</td>
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<td>South West</td>
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<td>37.7</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly</td>
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<td>Caradon</td>
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<td>Penwith CD &amp; Isles of Scilly</td>
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<td>43.8</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restormel</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendices 2

Organisations contacted

1. Fourways Youth Centre
2. Connexions St Austell & Communications and Press Officer
Connexions Cornwall and Devon Ltd.
3. Polgrean/Landreath Community Wardens
4. White Gold & the Youth Offending Team
5. Pupil Referral Unit. St Austell
7. DATT
8. Wise-up
9. WILD Young Mums project. Locally and county wide.
10. The Leaving care team
11. The Probation Service
12. Cornwall College
13. Health Visitors for Par/ St Blazey/Fowey/ Tywardreath area
14. Health Visitors for St Austell area
15. Penrice Maternity suite
16. Acorns Nursery
17. Footsteps Nursery
18. Happy Days Nursery
19. Lollypops pre-school playgroup
20. Rainbow pre-school playgroup
21. Tywardreath pre-school playgroup
22. Biscovery Nursey and Infant community School
23. Biscovery Juniors School
24. Tywardreath Infant and Junior
25. Youth Cornwall
26. Youthworks
27. Young People Cornwall
28. St Blazey PCSO’s
29. Social Care (Adult and Child)
30. Fowey Community College
31. Poltair Sports College
32. Ocean Housing
33. Family Information Services
Press release

Calling all young dads in Cornwall!

Young dads, step dads and male carers are wanted to help create a new project in the St Blazey/Par area.

Rob Beale, a local Youth Worker, has been employed by Family Services in the Restormel area to research developing services for young fathers.

The post, funded by South Restormel Extended Services, is part of a larger plan to bring services for young dads to south Restormel.

“It has been surprising how little is known about this group within our community,” said Rob.

“For this research to work we need to know how many young dads are out there, what their experiences have been and what opinions they have about fatherhood.”

The research will look at methods that have worked nationally and internationally but it is crucial to have local input.

Rob continued: “We are asking for all local young dads, male carers and step dads under 25, to contact us. We only need that first call, text or email and then we will do the rest. It doesn’t matter if you make one point or are happy to have a confidential interview. All the information gathered will be used to shape any future projects for young dads.”

Rob is also asking for relatives of young dads to contact him if they feel there are any services that they think could be useful.

To contact Rob please call or text 07891 840546 or email rbeale@cornwall.gov.uk

Family Services, part of Cornwall County Council, runs a variety of dads groups across the county through its Children’s Centres. Children’s Centres are designed for children under five and their families to receive high quality integrated services and information such as access to health and parenting support services, information about training and employment and access to play activities and childcare within their community.

For more information about your local Children’s Centre please contact the Family Information Service on 0800 5878191.

Notes to Editors

Family Services work with a range of partners to provide high quality, fully integrated services and support for families within their communities in Cornwall. There are six area teams in line with the counties districts which currently operate out of 36 designated Children’s Centres with a further five due to open by 2010.
Young dads - we need you!

Are you a dad or stepdad under 25?  
Do you have opinions you could share?  
We need you to help develop a new project with young dads

Entry into a prize draw for all those who make contact

Contact: Rob Beale  
text or phone tel: 07891 840546  
e-mail: rbeale@cornwall.gov.uk
Chatting to the Young Parents their comments about a Young Dads service:

- They are confident about being a parent in the house but not when they go out.
- They need encouragement to show emotion.
- They think guidance instead of ‘telling’ Dads would be the way to work with them. Young mum’s experiences were that when they were told they could become hostile.
- They need ‘guidance’ in how to change nappies.
- They will need bribery to get them out—perhaps a trip out without the children.
- It will be hard to get them.
- They are not into meeting in groups. They don’t want to make new friends.
- They don’t want to go and meet new people. An example was given that the mum wanted to invite one of the mums she had met at the group over for dinner but the partner didn’t want it to happen.
- They act all hard but they are really shy.
- They need to have something [information] about the positive parts of being a dad.
- Show them the realities of being a Dad.
- They need to know the realities of being a Dad.
- That’s it’s not un-cool to be a Dad.
- To have confidence with babies.
- Due to their lack of knowledge. They don’t always know the boundaries.

This was in reference to that this young mums partner had thrown their baby up in the air when he was very young and also held the baby too tight. Other young mums commented on this in that the young dads often thought their babies would be out playing football with them soon after birth.

- It should become a group eventually.
- It should be informal [education] with the Dads picking what they want to learn.
- Before you move into a group you could pair off Dads who would be compatible.
- Please give them cooking skills! For them to come home and cook a spag bog would be great.
- Time- afternoon- not too early not too late NOT Sat as that is a family day.
- If a group where? In a family pub, informal, pool table, NOT a Children’s Centre (a mum says she has seen dads in children’s centres skirting around the walls or waving from out of the room, when picking up).
- 1st & 2nd meeting on there own. The maybe look at getting them to a group.
- When they do get together, get them to bring their kids as then they have something to talk about, to stop the awkwardness.
- They need a male worker.
- When: As soon as mid wife knows - a dads pack (like the stuff in ‘Emmas Diary’)
- Mid wife or Health Visitor always asks for the Mum to book in a visit - could ask the Dad?
- Could have a Health Visitor style dads worker.
- Health Visitors need to involve the Dad.
- Give them a check list for when they go out as often they just take the baby.
• Every 2/3 weeks Dads group meets up with local Mums group. Ok that they won’t be partners of Mums. Bring kids and do a trip out
• Lorraine HV- has very little contact with Dads all set up for mums
• Education side- dads need to know that when the baby comes along that there are other priorities. e.g. mums do not want to have sex straight away and that they will be concentrating on other things.

Where to find young dads?
• You need to go into Town with Flyers
• You need to go to Puls8
• They need incentives to come-hire a stripper- food
• ASDA- but in the car park
• Polkyth 5-a-side night
• At the gym
• St Austell Rugby club
• Football training and football teams
• Sports clubs- speak to coaches
• Ante-natal
• Mid wives

After hearing about the fact that a young father had been very prepared for his partners pregnancy after being told all about it by his Mum at 18 and then again when he found out he was going to have a baby at 23, a mum suggested; “Train us up so that we can speak to our sons about it and make sure they are just as prepared!”
**Young dads research questionnaire**

All information from this will be kept confidential. The answers will only be used by Family Services for their report but will be untraceable to you.

Please answer the following questions as fully as possible. If you need support to answer any of please speak to the person handing these out or contact Rob Beale 07891840546.

1. Please list four positives about being a (young) dad?

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2. Please list four things you wish were different about being a (young) dad?

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3. Tick as many that apply to you

**If there were a service for young dads would you like;**

- [ ] A Young Dads worker who would come and see you on a 121 basis
- [ ] A Young Dads group
- [ ] Regular trips out for Dads with their children
- [ ] Regular ‘being a Dad’ training days
- [ ] Group activities for Dads and Mums
- [ ] All of the above
- [ ] Any other comments

Please Turn Over
4. If a young dads service were provided please tick which of these would be the best time to be told about it:

- During the pregnancy
- After the baby has been born
- If you decide to look for it
- I wouldn’t use it

5. In your own words say how you feel about being as young; dad/ step dad / father figure including any difficulties you may have experienced

If you are happy to be contacted about future projects or further research please give you contact details:

Name: 
Age: 
Contact No.: 

Thank you for your help.
Consent Form

Dear Young Dad,

My name is Rob Beale. I am a Youth Worker and I am currently undertaking research in St Blazey for Cornwall County Council, Family Services in relation to Services for Young Dads.

You can contact me at:
Restormel Family Services, Stennack Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25.
Telephone: office 01726 874010 or 07891840546.

The aim of my research is to:
Help Family Services develop the services they offer Young Dads in order to meet their needs. This research is an opportunity to give Young Dads the opportunity to say what their needs are and what they would like.

Part of my research is to interview Young Dads under 25 years. I should like to ask questions about being a Dad, what has or would be useful to you and other specific ones that will help the research. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions you do not have to do so as all questions are answered on a voluntary basis.

No identifiable information will be used from the interview and your identity is completely anonymous. It is only your views that are needed.

Please tick the box to show you agree to take part in an interview.

What benefits are likely to emerge from my research?
It will help Family Services to provide quality services for Young Dads that they need.

Confidentiality:

- All information you give to me will be treated under the ethical principles laid down by Cornwall County Council Family Services in that I shall treat you with respect and conduct my research professionally. If you feel I have behaved in any way unethically you should contact Family Services on the office number above and ask in the first instance for Jane Acton who is the Restormel Family Services Area manager.

- Your answers will be used in collating general data and are not specific to your family. Therefore all identifiable information shall be taken out.

- A full copy of the report will be available for you.

By signing this form it does not obligate you to continue to give your consent. You do not have to agree to take part in all my research. You can withdraw your consent at any time. A copy of this form will be left with you.

Signature of parent/carer:                                  Date:

Signature of researcher:                                   Date
Young dads interviews

Hello. Before I start the interview I’ve got to go over a few things.

Confidentiality:
Everything you say is confidential unless you say something which means you or somebody else is at risk of serious harm.

About the Questions:
Some of the things you say may be used in a report but your name will not be used and your information will not be traceable back to you.

However, I would like to acknowledge you in the report and I would like your permission to do so.

The interview should take just over ½ hour.
I will be using a recording device during this interview, because I find it hard to take notes, please don’t be put off by it and try not to be conscious of it as no one but me will hear it and it will be deleted after use.

Q: Are you happy to continue with the interview?
Q: Can I take some details?
  ◦ Name
  ◦ Age
Q: Are you with Mum (relationship)? Yes or no
Q: Do you live with Mum? Yes or no
Q: Contact no?
Q: Due date or the child’s age and the following details:
  ◦ Male or female
  ◦ Name
Q: How did you find out about the young Dads research?

The first part of this will be Dad questions
The second part will be about what you would find useful as a young Dad
The last part is other bits we haven’t covered.

Q: How have you found being a Dad?
Q: How do feel about becoming a Dad?
Good or things you would change
Not if pre-birth:
Q: What involvement do you have in your child’s life?
  ◦ Contact
  ◦ Activities (Play, bath, put to bed, feed)
  ◦ Support
  ◦ Mum
Q: What roles would you like to play? Is there anything else you would like to do?
  ◦ Contact
  ◦ Activities (Play, bath, put to bed, feed)
  ◦ Support
  ◦ Mum
Q: What involvement do you think, other family members including… would like you to play?
Q: What are your priorities now you are a Dad—have they changed from before?
Q: Did/do you feel ready/have enough information?
Q: Do you have any thoughts about what services would be useful for young dads?
  ◦ Ideas

2. Young dads worker
To offer one to one support:
  ◦ Advice guidance
  ◦ To listen
  ◦ To advocate
  ◦ To offer contraception
  ◦ What happens during pregnancy
To offer group support:
  ◦ Parenting tips
  ◦ First aid
  ◦ The law
  ◦ Trips out
  ◦ Dads classes
  ◦ Dads coming together
One to one, group or both?

Q: Where?

Q: When?

Q: Dads pack?

Q: What it might include?

- Pre-birth
- After babies born
- When you want to look for it

Q: Where you involved in the Midwife/HV visits?

Q: Do you go to any classes-ante-natal?

I’m going to ask some questions that are slightly sensitive. Please don’t be offended by them. It’s because research shows that these can be characteristics’ of some young Dads:

Q: Substance and alcohol abuse: Yes or no?

Q: Trouble with the police- anti-social behaviour: Yes or no?

Q: Been exposed to domestic violence: Yes or no?

Q: Are you in employment?: Yes or no?

Thank you for your time.

References


dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1145199/Multiple-fathers-benefits-tap--meet-teen-mother-triplets-way.html


Fatherhood Institute (2008) at mail@fatherhoodinstitute.org or 0845 634 1328, or by post at 9 Nevill Street, Abergavenny NP7 5AA. FI submission to Laming review calls for child protection strategies to address fatherhood (2008)

Fatherhood Institute (2008a) Fatherhood Institute Research Summary: Young Fathers Young Fathers: Influences, Barriers, Possibilities: Messages from the Research

Fatherhood Institute at mail@fatherhoodinstitute.org or 0845 634 1328, or by post at 9 Nevill Street, Abergavenny NP7 5AA


Morris, J. & Wates, M. Published: November 2006 in the UK, by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. Also available on: http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=17&cID=782
The Red Knob http://www.theredknob.co.uk/
If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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County Hall  
Treyew Road  
Truro TR1 3AY  

Telephone: **0300 1234 100**  
Email: **enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk**  
www.cornwall.gov.uk