



# 1. The co-creation team

This toolkit was developed by North East Young Dads and Lads with support from the Following Young Fathers Further research team at the University of Lincoln. The co-creation team included young fathers and peer researchers Robert Oughton and Jordan Richardson of the North East Young Dads and Lads, who are committed to improving the parenting and support experiences of young men who become a parent at an early age.



[www.neydl.uk](http://www.neydl.uk)



[www.digidad.uk](http://www.digidad.uk)



[www.followingyoungfathersfurther.org](http://www.followingyoungfathersfurther.org)



[www.if-trust.org](http://www.if-trust.org)



[www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk)

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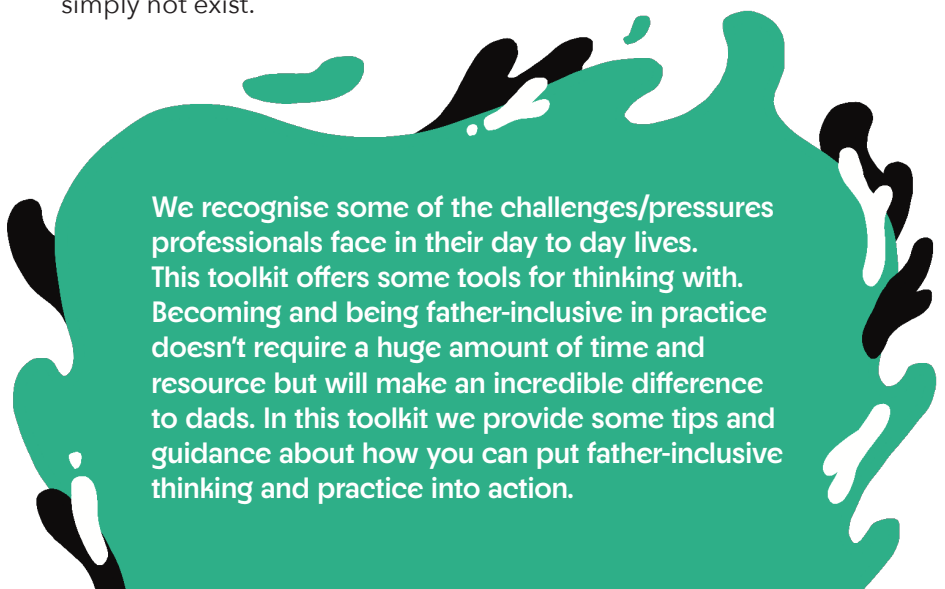
## Acknowledgements

The co-creation team wish to thank everyone who participated in the focus groups and interviews which helped to inform some of the content in this toolkit.

In addition, we wish to thank the young dads and professionals who worked with Jordan and Robert to create the interactive content. Special thanks to Jonah York for editing the content and supporting our work.

Design and illustrative support was provided by Rob and Natalie at [www.noble.studio](http://www.noble.studio) with our gratitude.

Finally, we are extremely grateful both to the Imagine Foundation and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust for funding this much needed and timely resource and the charities wider funders and sponsors without whom NEYDL and its services would simply not exist.



We recognise some of the challenges/pressures professionals face in their day to day lives. This toolkit offers some tools for thinking with. Becoming and being father-inclusive in practice doesn't require a huge amount of time and resource but will make an incredible difference to dads. In this toolkit we provide some tips and guidance about how you can put father-inclusive thinking and practice into action.



Name: Robert Oughton

Current Age: 27

Became a Parent: 19

# of children: 1

What it means to be a dad:

**"THE RESPONSIBILITY TAKEN UP WHEN BECOMING A PARENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IS SUCH A HIGHLY REWARDING LIFE EXPERIENCE. THERE'S NO OTHER FEELING QUITE LIKE IT."**

Future aspirations:

**"I WANT TO BE ABLE TO ALWAYS BE IN A POSITION IN MY LIFE WHERE I CAN PROVIDE FOR MY DAUGHTER. IF SHE EVER REALLY NEEDS ANYTHING, I WANT HER TO FEEL LIKE SHE CAN ALWAYS COME TO ME."**

I first heard about NEYDL through Gateshead Young Carers, whilst caring for my own parents. Over the past 6 years, I've been a trustee for NEYDL, a Young Dads Council representative, 'DigiDAD' Advisory Group member, and most recently, a Peer Enabler. I have also completed training and drawing on my lived expertise as a young dad, have used my new skills to co-create films, podcasts, and other e-learning content for 'DigiDAD'. As a Peer Enabler, I've gained further insights, understanding and experience through meeting and working with professionals in many different fields. In this role I have built positive and long-lasting relationships with families and young dads affected by perinatal mental health difficulties. I especially enjoy giving them the same support that I received. NEYDL's support really helped me to play an active, loving and meaningful role in my own daughters' life.



Name: Jordan Richardson

Current Age: 24

Became a Parent: 16

# of children: 1

What it means to be a dad

**"BEING THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF FOR MY CHILD."**

Future aspirations

**"TO BE ABLE TO SEE MY DAUGHTER MORE AND CONSTANTLY BUILD UP A RELATIONSHIP AND PUSH HER IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION."**

I have an 8-year-old daughter and joined NEYDL in 2015 after she was born. I was one of the first dads to attend the Gateshead Young Dads' group and have since taken part in a range of activities and skill-based sessions. Recently I have presented to Social Work students, delivered workshops to other professionals, and met with young dads from across the country. I joined NEYDL's board in 2017 because I wanted to make a difference and get the word out that young dads can be dedicated and loving fathers too. In 2022, I became a Peer Enabler. This role involves helping young dads whose partners are affected by perinatal mental health challenges. I have also completed training as a Community Cycling Group Leader and enjoy nothing more than introducing young dads, their children and families to the joys and health benefits of regular cycling.



**Doug Laidlaw**

Doug has worked for NEYDL since 2017. He has worked within the voluntary sector with men and boys for over 24 years; working for youth work charities in East Sussex, Kent and Northumberland as well as a National charity in Newcastle upon Tyne. Doug's role within NEYDL is Senior Project Worker, working directly with young dads and their families as well as the day-to-day management, training and supervision of NEYDL's team of staff and volunteers. Doug is also the lead for safeguarding and health and safety for NEYDL.



**Anna Tarrant**

Anna is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Lincoln. She is also the Director of Following Young Fathers Further, a qualitative longitudinal and participatory study of the parenting journeys and support needs of young fathers. In this research, she is pioneering methods of co-creation with young fathers, working with them to translate their expertise and experiences as young fathers into evidence-based content for professionals and policy makers.



**Laura Way**

Dr Laura Way is a Research Fellow for the Following Young Fathers Further team. She has expertise in qualitative research methods, with a particular interest in creative research methodologies. She is particularly interested in social ageing, gender across the lifecourse, and subcultural participation. Her PhD utilised a feminist methodology to explore the construction and maintenance of punk identities amongst older women.



**Kevin Stoodley**

Building on his experiences supporting young dads on a consultancy basis for a young women's charity from 2015-16, Kevin founded NEYDL in 2017 and has led the charity since. A nationally recognised and award-winning health promotion specialist and youth & community work manager, Kevin has worked with marginalised and disadvantaged communities on behalf of voluntary, statutory, and private sector organisations for 26 years. Specialising in teenage fatherhood and young men's risk-taking behaviours, Kevin holds degrees in both Psychology and Youth & Community Work.

## 2. Why it is important to 'Think Dad!'

"LET'S START WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT TALKING POINT WHEN WE ARE ASKED THIS QUESTION – THE YOUNG FATHERS THEMSELVES. I THINK IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT THEIR INVOLVEMENT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING IS RECOGNISED AT ITS ABSOLUTE FULLEST FROM ALL ANGLES. WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING THEM THROUGH PARENTHOOD YOU KNOW, AS THIS IS WITHOUT DOUBT ONE OF THE PROUDEST MOMENTS OF THEIR LIVES BUT CAN ALSO BE THE SCARIEST. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE SOME OF THE POTENTIAL THOUGHTS GOING THROUGH THEIR HEADS AT THAT MOMENT IN TIME. BECOMING A DAD, YOU KNOW. AM I GOING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH? WILL I BE ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR MY FAMILY? I HOPE I DON'T LET ANYONE DOWN!"

By Robert Oughton, a young dad



Hear more from  
Robert here!

# 3. The North East Young Dads and Lads

"I'VE CHANGED A LOT. I JUST USED TO BE ALL OVER THE PLACE ALL THE TIME, I USED TO BE FIGHTING, DRINKING AND EVERYTHING, BUT NOW I STOPPED ALL THAT AND EVER SINCE I'VE STARTED HERE, I'D SAY I'VE COMPLETELY CHANGED."



## Who we are

Founded in 2017, NEYDL is an award winning and community-based charity, working to improve the lives and prospects of disadvantaged young dads, many of whom have been overlooked or side-lined by mainstream services due to their age, gender, and past or present difficulties.

Our **vision** is for young dads to be valued and supported in their role as parents. Our **mission** is to enable this community to play a safe, active, and meaningful role in their children's lives, by supporting and connecting young dads and influencing wider practice.

Aligned to this vision and mission, we aim to address the perception that young dads from disadvantaged communities are a problem that needs fixing and counter the view that they are unreachable, unteachable, and disinterested, recognising the lack of opportunity they may have had and being the critical friend that gives them that chance to shine.



## Our 'Special Sauce'

Receiving self, peer, and professional referrals from a broad range of services, and working in excess of 50 hours (on average) with every young man we meet, our work has four main strands:

- 1. Personalised one-to-one support** provided by professionally qualified Youth and Community Workers and Peer Enablers with lived experience of young fatherhood.
- 2. Peer supported social and learning based group work.**
- 3. The provision of training and information** through DigiDAD, a pioneering online e-learning parenting programme (see page 7 for details).
- 4. Influencing policy and practice through support** for young dads' participation in major research studies led by professional researchers.

“THANKS TO YOUNG DADS  
(NEYDL) I FEEL CLOSER TO MY  
CHILD AND A BETTER DAD.”

“FOR THE FIRST TIME I’VE  
TALKED TO SOMEONE, AND  
THEY LISTENED TO ME AND  
NOT JUDGED ME.”



## About

DigiDAD is a free to access e-learning platform made by young dads for young dads which features films, animations, podcasts, and e-learning modules focusing on parenting and other critical themes. If you are a professional who engages with young fathers, we encourage you to tell them about DigiDAD:

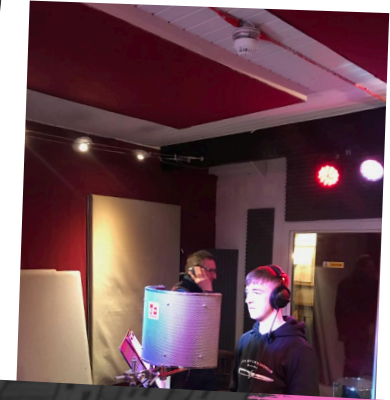
DigiDAD can be viewed online via our dedicated DigiDAD website:

[www.DigiDad.uk](http://www.DigiDad.uk)

Or

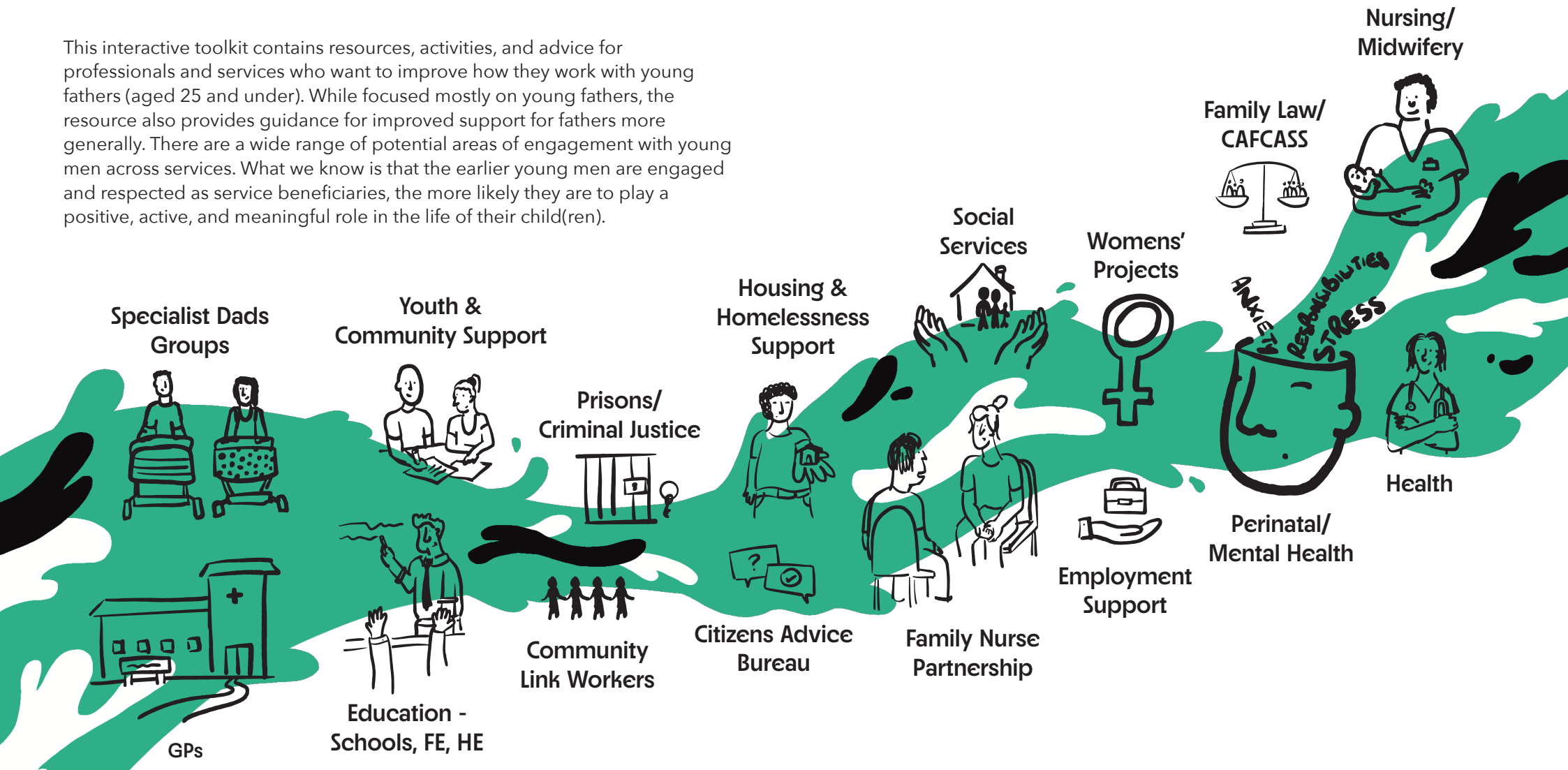
Youtube platform:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcKAcSuiuO3JJp71p7uxhA>



# 4. Who is this toolkit for?

This interactive toolkit contains resources, activities, and advice for professionals and services who want to improve how they work with young fathers (aged 25 and under). While focused mostly on young fathers, the resource also provides guidance for improved support for fathers more generally. There are a wide range of potential areas of engagement with young men across services. What we know is that the earlier young men are engaged and respected as service beneficiaries, the more likely they are to play a positive, active, and meaningful role in the life of their child(ren).





# 5. Why this toolkit?

The aim of this toolkit is simple. We want dads to be better supported to be involved in their children's lives, regardless of their age, socio-economic background, ethnicity or parenting circumstances. When dads are actively supported to be involved in their children's lives, everyone benefits.

We want to support professionals to understand the value of father-inclusive approaches to practice, to start conversations in their organisations about the importance of authentically engaging with fathers and to develop confidence in overcoming some of the barriers that services experience, by providing some simple tools and tips that have the potential to make a big difference.

## The toolkit therefore aims to:

- Promote father engagement in the family as well as positive images of young fathers.
- Give young fathers a voice.
- Encourage attention to how cultures and practices of family and child services contribute to the marginalisation of men from family and childcare.
- Provide opportunities for reflection on professional practice.
- Develop a set of core competencies that professionals can use to assess their practice and to improve their confidence and capacity to make service improvements through increased and improved engagement with dads.



What does father-inclusive practice mean to you?



What benefits might father-inclusive practice have for children, for mums and for dads?

<https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/resource-category/policy-briefs/>

# 6. How to use the toolkit



# 7. Defining dads

Young fathers are a diverse group of people. The profiles of our dads at the North East Young Dads and Lads presented in section 8 demonstrate just how diverse a group young fathers are.

In your practice, you may encounter young men from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, from different ethnic communities, with different sexualities and gender identities. This includes those who identify as male (including trans males) and those who do not identify as a male or female gender but fulfil a parenting role. Some may be teenagers, others may be in their early twenties. Young fathers also have diverse experiences of parenting and family life. Being a father does not necessarily mean being biologically related to a child. A father might be step-parent or legal guardian. They may be living with their children, living in a different household, or dads with parental responsibility.



An interview with Ruben Vemba - young father, Young Dads Collective member and champion of father-inclusive support

# 8. Diverse dads

Some dads we've supported at NEYDL:



## Adam

Current Age: 26

Became a Parent: 24

# of children: 2

What it means to be a dad:

**"A WAY OF LIFE AND SHARING LOVE AND HAPPINESS THROUGH ANOTHER VERSION OF YOU."**

Future aspirations:

**"I'D LOVE TO TAKE MY KIDS OUT AND TEACH THEM ABOUT ALL THE THINGS I LOVE LIKE PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD."**

**"NOT EVERYTHING IS ABOUT MONEY THERE'S PLENTY OF BEAUTIFUL THINGS OUT THERE."**



## Mark

Current Age: 31

Became a Parent: 25

# of children: 1

What it means to be a dad:

**"IT'S A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE, IT'S HELPED ME GROW UP AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY."**

Future aspirations:

**"I'D LIKE TO HAVE MY LIFE ON TRACK AND FOLLOW MY GOALS."**

**"I'D ALSO LIKE TO BE ABLE TO TAKE MY DAUGHTER TO DISNEYLAND FLORIDA."**



## Chris

Current Age: 36

Became a Parent: 25

# of children: 1

What it means to be a dad:

**"TO ME BEING A DAD MEANS BEING PRESENT AND ABLE TO HELP GUIDE YOUR CHILD AND ALSO TO BE OPEN TO LEARNING AND ADAPTING TO SUIT YOUR CHILD."**

Future aspirations:

**"TO HAVE A HEALTHY AND HAPPY FAMILY AND TO BE IN A PLACE WHERE I CAN HELP OTHERS BECOME THEIR BEST SELVES."**



## Ruben

Current Age: 33

Became a Parent: 23

# of children: 1

What does it mean to be a dad:

**"I GET TO GIVE THE WORLD A PRESENT - MY PRESENT IN TO THE WORLD IS MY CHILD."**

Future aspirations:

**"TO HAVE MY OWN SPACE FOR A FILM SCHOOL."**



## Jamie

Current Age: 23

Became a Parent: 17

# of Children: 2

What does it mean to be a dad:

**"JUST BEING THE BEST DAD I CAN BE NO MATTER WHAT, WHEN IT COMES TO FAMILY, THAT'S MY PRIORITY OVER ANYTHING."**

Future aspirations:

**"BEING A ROLE MODEL TO MY SON AND SHOWING HIM RIGHT FROM WRONG, GIVING AS MUCH SUPPORT AS I CAN AS HE GETS OLDER. I WANT MY KID TO HAVE EVERYTHING I DIDN'T HAVE."**



## Tyler

Current Age: 21

Became a Parent: 21

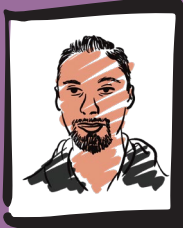
# of children: 1

What does it mean to be a dad:

**"IT MEANS THE ABSOLUTE WORLD TO ME - MY DAUGHTER HELPS ME MASSIVELY WITH MY MENTAL HEALTH; EVERY TIME I HOLD MY DAUGHTER IT'S AN INSTANT SENSE OF RELIEF AND CALMNESS."**

Future aspirations:

**"I'D LIKE TO INVEST IN REAL-ESTATE AND GROW MY OWN BUSINESS."**



## Will

Current Age: 23

Became a Parent: 17

# of Children: 4

What does it mean to be a dad:

**"I'M JUST A DAD, I PROVIDE FOR MY KIDS, AND I SUPPORT THEM IN EVERYTHING. BEING A DAD IS MY LIFE."**

Future aspirations:

**"I HOPE THAT I'M IN A POSITION TO WORK HARD ENOUGH SO I CAN PROVIDE FOR MY KIDS AS THEY'RE GROWING UP, SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING."**



## Reece

Current Age: 21

Became a parent: 20

# of Children: 1

What does it mean to be a dad:

**"IT MEANS I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY NOT JUST FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR MY LITTLE LAD AND I HOPE TO RAISE HIM BETTER THAN I WAS RAISED."**

Future aspirations?

**"INTRODUCING MY SON TO NEW THINGS AND SHARING ALL OUR MEMORIES TOGETHER. REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HAVING CONVERSATIONS WITH MY BEST FRIEND OVER THE YEARS."**



# 9. Mythbusting

"DAD IS ABSENT/  
HIDDEN"

Dads are not  
babysitters, they  
are parents

"DAD IS ONLY A  
BREADWINNER/  
PROVIDER"

If dad isn't around  
or can't attend  
appointments, it doesn't  
mean he doesn't care

"THE FECKLESS DAD:  
YOUNG FATHERS ARE  
INCAPABLE OF LOOKING  
AFTER THEIR CHILDREN"

"YOUNG DADS  
ARE 'HARD TO  
REACH'"

Dads are an  
important resource  
and an asset to  
their children

"YOUNG DADS LACK  
CONFIDENCE - DADS  
ARE IMMATURE"

Dad can be more  
than breadwinners  
and providers, they  
are also caregivers

Dads aren't 'hard-to-  
reach, services are  
often 'hard-to-access'

"YOUNG DADS ARE  
AGGRESSIVE AND A  
RISK - THE ANGRY/  
DANGEROUS DAD"

"DAD IS A  
BABYSITTER"

Young doesn't mean  
incapable. A holistic approach  
to support involves listening  
to young dads without  
judgement and supporting  
them to overcome some of  
the challenges they face

"PARENTS =  
MOTHERS/  
CARERS"



How does your service perceive young fathers?

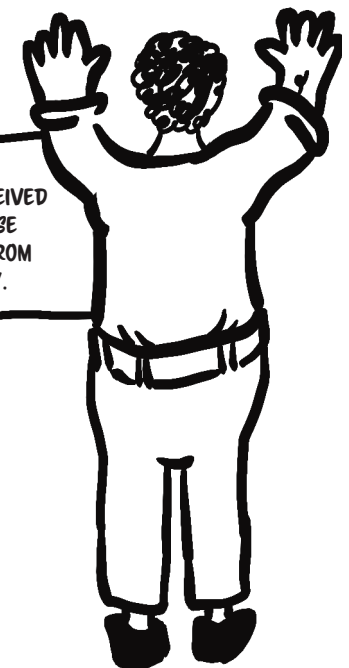
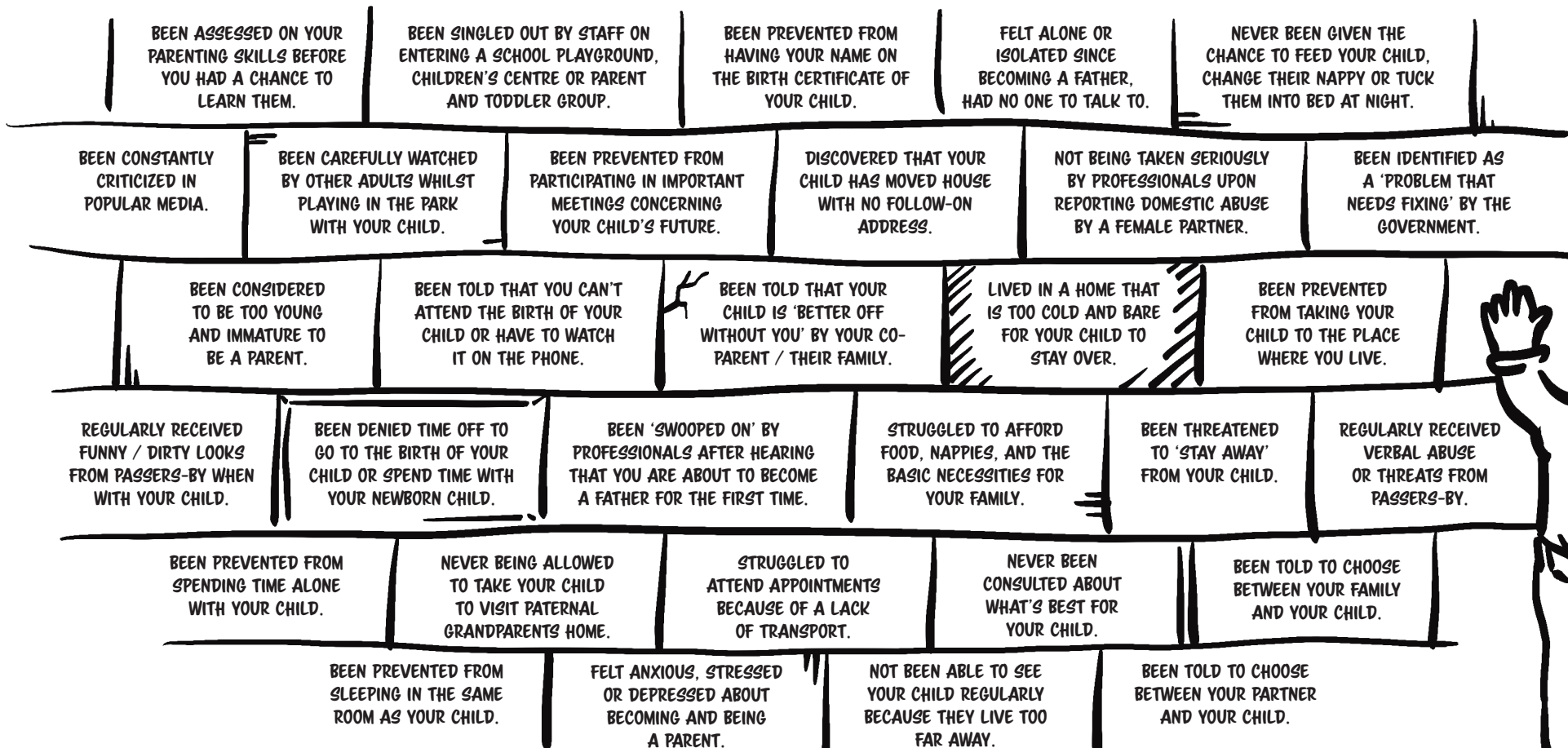
Reflect on what you have read and heard so far and listen to the sound bites by dads and professionals using the QR codes throughout the toolkit. How do they challenge the myths in red?

# 10. Have you ever?



Listen to young men's experiences of early fatherhood in *Focusing On Fatherhood* a short film made by young dads.

The following scenarios are based on what the young fathers that we support and research with tell us are commonly experienced. The wall represents just some of the barriers they may have to overcome across their parenting journeys.



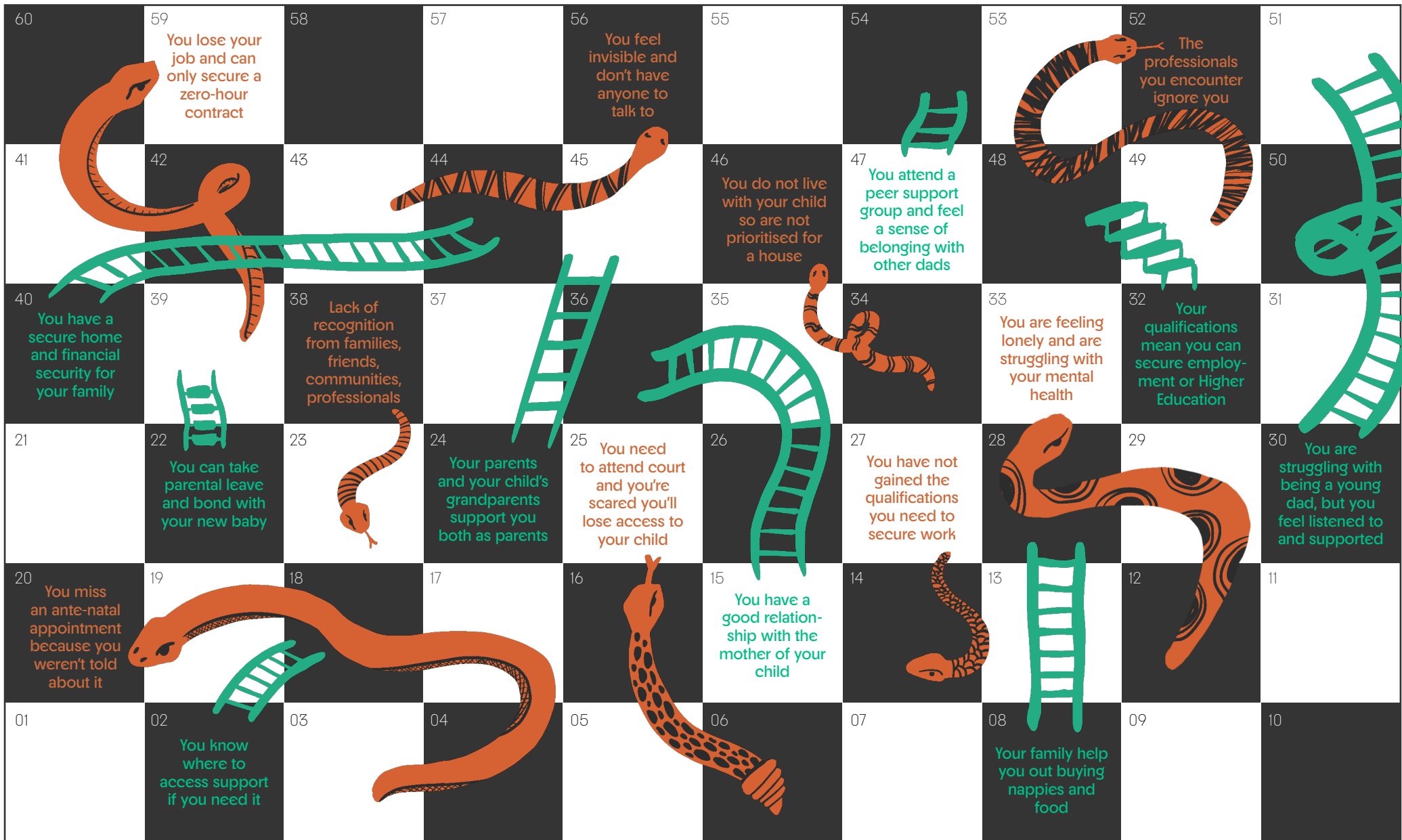


# 11. Fatherhood journeys - a game of Snakes & Ladders

For lots of young fathers, parenting can be a bit like a game of snakes and ladders. There are lots of ladders of opportunity for young men to be an involved father and various aspects of their lives that support them to 'be there' for their children. However, they may also be parenting on shaky ground and struggle to navigate a range of challenges, as represented by the snakes.

Take a look at some of the ups and downs young fathers may experience across their parenting journeys on the following page.





# 12. Is there a right time? Through the Eyes of Young Fathers

“WE HOPE IT CARRIES THE WARM, WISE, FUNNY, AND SOMETIMES ANGRY VOICES OF THE YOUNG FATHERS, OPENING A WINDOW INTO THEIR EXPERIENCES. A CLEAR MESSAGE RUNS THROUGH ITS FRAGMENTS - THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF CARE AS A TOOL TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.”

- Albert Potrony and Vicky Sturrs, March 2022

As part of the Equal Play exhibition that took over BALTIC's ground floor galleries over 12 months from September 2021, a group of young dads from NEYDL's Regional Young Dads Council worked with Dr M J Richardson, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at Newcastle University, Vicky Sturrs, BALTIC's Head of Learning and Civic Engagement, the exhibitions creator Albert Potrony and former members of the Achilles Heel Collective to explore the materials from the exhibition and consider how it related to their own experiences of fatherhood. The e-zine and poster created are the result of the conversations which took place.

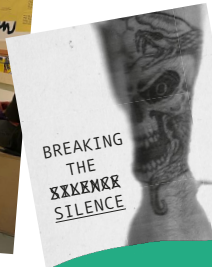


**BALTIC**

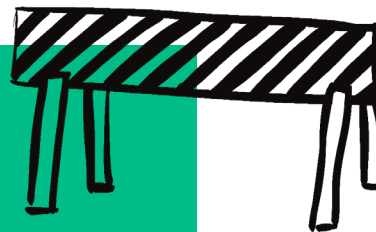
Newcastle University



View the full zine here!



# 13. What challenges do you experience?



Common questions we hear from professionals:

- Why work with dads?
- When should I be working with dad?
- Am I allowed to work with dads?
- How do I authentically engage with dads?
- What do dads need?
- Is it my job/responsibility to work with dad?
- How do I speak to Dad?
- What should I do if Dad isn't in a relationship with Mum?
- What should I do if Dad is non-resident?
- Do I have to be a man?

In our work, we engage with professionals in a range of sectors. We often hear about the kinds of challenges professionals face in engaging dads. This includes:

- Not seeing dad and knowing how to identify him.
- Not knowing how to talk to dads and start a relationship.
- Gatekeepers: Mums or family members saying dad is OK, dad does not want or need any help.
- Lack of time and resources to attend training about support for fathers.
- Lack of dedicated support and services to refer young dads into.
- Feeling like a 'lone wolf' in championing fathers/ Hostility towards those who do champion dads.
- Lack of commitment or interest from managers.
- Lack of cohesive policy to promote and embed father-inclusion if dad isn't living with mum or child.

Use this space to reflect on your own experiences and opinions.



# 14. Sidelining & Surveillance

Research demonstrates that young fathers are stigmatised by society and face discrimination in services (Neale and Davies, [2015](#); Tarrant et al. [2022](#); Owens, [2022](#)). Yet young fathers aspire to be treated as clients of professional services and place a high value on professional support (Neale and Davies, [2015](#); Tarrant et al. [2022b](#)).

Two types of unhelpful forms of professional practice have been identified by Neale and Davies ([2015](#)): Sidelining and surveillance.

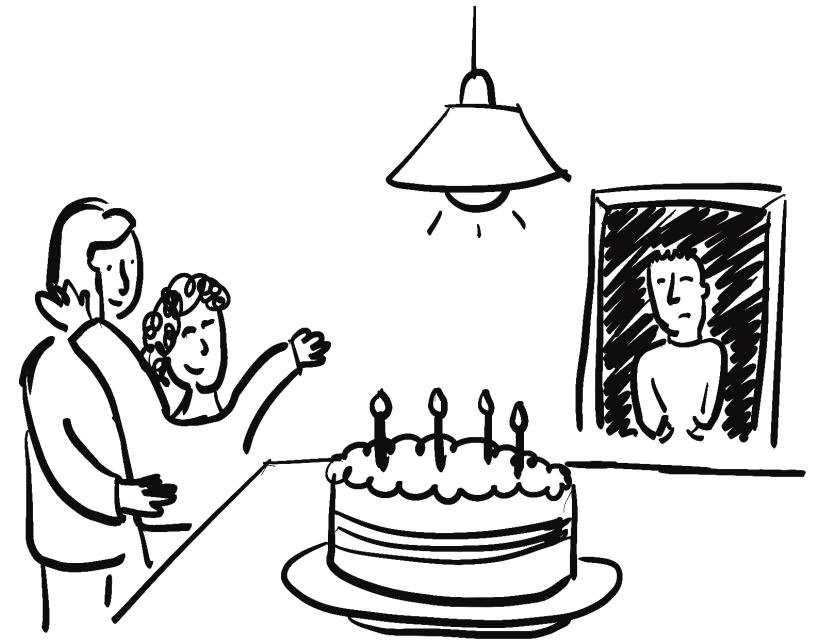
## What is sidelining?

Whether intended or not side-lining is an approach that fails to provide young men as parents with recognition and respect. At an organisational level, fathers may feel sidelined when services fail to publicise their offer to young men, sustaining their ignorance about what support is available, whether they are eligible, and how to access it.

## What is surveillance?

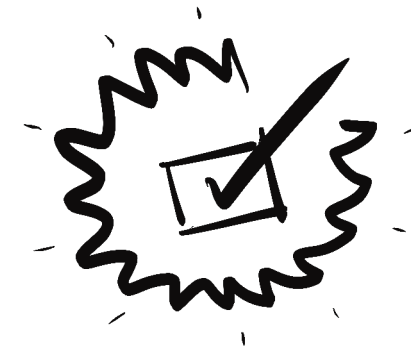
Surveillance characterises a risk, rather than a strengths-based approach in engagements with young fathers. It may involve making assumptions about a young father that assume the worst. While attention to risk may be essential where there are safeguarding issues, many young fathers report the feeling that their parenting credentials are discredited and feel stigmatised by what they perceive as a lack of respect.

There are lots of ways that both sidelining and surveillance practices can be actively resisted by professionals and services. We provide some 'must do's' on our next page and hear from young fathers about what a supportive professional can do for them.



[Hear a clip from Anna Tarrant here!](#)

# 15. Must Dos for Dads



What if we said that there are some quick wins and 'must dos' that you can implement in your own organisation or service? Indeed, there are lots of ways that services and professionals can ensure that their support offer is more accessible to dads. Here we list some essential 'must dos' that we encourage every service to consider as an essential aspect of their delivery.

1. Work with young fathers rather than impose on them. They should be consulted at every stage of service design and involved in the education and training of professionals.
2. Reflect on any unconscious biases and 'park' judgements.
3. As a service, develop a picture of local support so that you can signpost if necessary.
4. Persevere with outreach and support - "keep the door open". It is assumed that young men are hard to engage and they are unlikely to self-refer. Think about how to make your service more accessible by proactively making fathers more visible.
5. Advertise services to dads, as well as mums. The neutral language of parent may put dads off from attending.
6. Create safe spaces for young men where they feel valued and visible. Use positive imagery of young dads engaging with their children. Images should represent diversity in fatherhood to ensure inclusivity.
7. Collect data or details from dads, as well as mums, at first contact and ask them the question; are you a dad?

8. Be aware of the value of holistic support, especially around mental health and emotional well-being.
9. Explore more creative ways of engaging young men, perhaps in a separate place from the office. Where possible, within funding and organisational culture constraints, consideration should be given to more creative ways of doing this. This might include urban walking, socialising events or activity-based sessions like cooking or DIY.
10. Recognise, believe in, and celebrate young fatherhood.
11. You might be the first and only person to congratulate a young man on becoming a Dad and it might make all the difference to his future outlook and engagement. As part of their engagement, NEYDL always offers Dad a congratulations card and teddy bear as a gift to his child.
12. Find or create opportunities to bring young dads together, initially through sports and socials. And don't be afraid to make connections between young dads from different backgrounds, experiences and cultures. Their shared status as young dads will often bridge other barriers.

# 16. Core Competencies for Professionals

## What our young father beneficiaries tell us they value in professional support

Dedicated to being inclusive of the whole family

Caring and compassionate

A champion for young fathers committed to embedding and promoting change in service provision

Non judgemental

Ready to go the extra mile

Creative and imaginative

A good listener

A good networker/partnership builder

Sociable and approachable



Enthusiastic with an ability to motivate others

Empathic to the challenges / inequalities facing dads/young dads

Possessing a strong sense of self and able to model and demonstrate best practice – e.g. as a father figure

Honest and open

Possesses clear professional boundaries with a willingness to consistently challenge professionals and community members alike (e.g., sexism, racism, harmful behaviours, negative attitudes)

Likes babies and children – you will see and hold and play with a lot of them

# 17. Conversations between professionals & young dads

We believe a big part of our success in working with young fathers is having open and authentic conversations with them about their parenting and about the support they need. Listen to our 'Think Dad!' podcasts, which feature conversations with professionals who champion father-inclusive practice in their sectors.



Authentic, strength-based support for young dads, an interview with Doug Laidlaw and Kevin Stoodley



Father inclusion during the perinatal period with Angela Ward



Father inclusion in cultural and leisure spaces with Vicky Sturrs and Dr Michael Richardson



Guidance and support through law proceedings with Jenny Goldstein



# 18. Look at what you can do when you include dads

An interview with young dads Robert and Jordan as former service beneficiaries of NEYDL, peer researchers and co-creators of the "Think Dad!" Toolkit.



See and hear more from Robert and Jordan as they introduce their work to support young fathers whose families are supported by the Specialist Perinatal Community Mental Health Service (CNTW NHS Foundation Trust).

  
Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust



# 19. Examples of good practices

Across the UK, there are notable examples of effective, father-inclusive approaches to practice and service engagement where young fathers are supported to navigate their parenting journeys and some of the challenges they experience along the way. The following examples are just a selection of services that have supported young dads, both as beneficiaries and later as volunteers, enabling them to reach their full potential both as individuals and as fathers. Follow the links to explore the stories of young dads and the huge value of authentic support to their lives.



**DAD MATTERS; to mum, to baby, to everyone...**

[www.dadmatters.org.uk](http://www.dadmatters.org.uk), Manchester, UK

We aim to help dads have successful relationships with their families, and to support dads with anxiety, stress and mental health issues.

We hope to get dads engaged with services that have traditionally been targeted at mums, and to train & support volunteer dads to work with us.

We work directly with services that support Dads, families and especially babies to increase engagement and knowledge across the sector.

We want to make sure dads know how important they are, how to access support when they need it and why it's essential for baby's development.



Hear more from Doug Laidlaw here!

Dads Matters have a Youtube site, featuring a selection of videos about the experiences of the dads they support. These videos contain content about lived experience and may be triggering for some:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DadMattersUK/videos>

21-year-old Dan describes the challenges he has experienced with mental health and gambling addiction and how effective support from Dads Matters and a transition into peer support enabled him to turn things around and support others:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTgVfCxxT3c>

Job's story describes the challenges he experiences with his mental health when his partner struggles with her mental health. Job became a Dads Matters volunteer, supporting other dads to tell of their own experiences: <https://youtu.be/Vpha42o8NNo>



### The Young Dads Collective model

The Young Dads Collective (YDC), developed by Coram Family and Child Care, worked to improve the lives of young dads and their children by tackling the social exclusion that locks out young dads' potential. As experts by experience, the YDC's young dads worked with professionals to transform how organisations engage with young dads and overcome the hidden barriers that shut them out. They co-delivered training for professionals, spoke at events and made their case to decision makers on a local and national level. The YDC helped young dads to be vocal and heard, to support one another and to improve their life chances and those of their children.

Read more: <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/young-dads-collective>

In collaboration with Professor Anna Tarrant at the University of Lincoln, two new models have been established since 2016; the Young Dads Collective North (Leeds, 2016-17) and the Grimsby Dads Collective (Grimsby, 2020 - Present).

You can learn more about these projects using the following links:

Young Dads Collective North: <https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/asset/the-young-dads-collective-north/>

<https://followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/79/2017/04/SYD-final-report.pdf>

Grimsby Dads Collective: <https://www.ymca-humber.com/what-we-do/family-support/grimsby-dads-collective/>

You can hear from Grimsby Dads Collective volunteer Connor [here](#) about his experiences of becoming a young father during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Dads Rock, Edinburgh

<https://www.dadsrock.org.uk/young-dads>

Dads Rock have a tailored programme of support for young fathers. The service aim to get to know the young man and develop a program of support with them to develop their confidence and skills. Areas covered include self-care including physical and mental health, feeding and looking after babies and young children, the importance of play with children and economic management. Dads Rock also support young dads to become mentors in their own right. You can read stories from young dads by accessing the link to their website.

### Working With Men, London

Working with Men is a London based not-for-profit organisation that works with fathers to support them to be actively engaged in the lives of their children. Their 2017 report provides important insights about why young fathers matter; about the factors that influence their involvement; the policy background; the service provision landscape of the UK and accounts from young fathers and professionals.

Read the report: <https://futuremen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Future-Men-Young-Fathers-Report-2017-1.pdf>

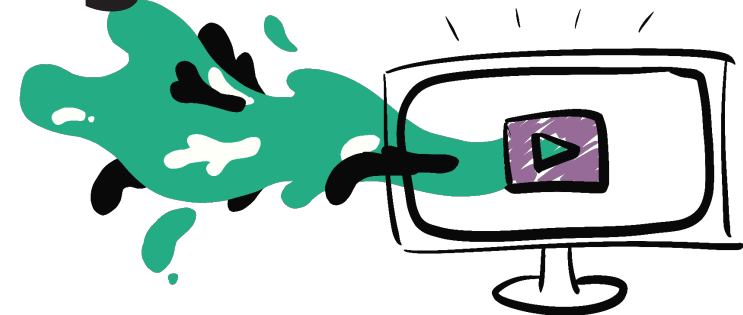
## 20. Pledges

Thank you for engaging with our interactive, father-inclusive practice toolkit for professionals. We hope you feel inspired to promote father-inclusion in your work and in your service. Please follow the QR code to respond to a couple of questions and make a pledge to practice based on what you have learned and what you hope to achieve. All responses are anonymous and are requested purely to encourage your own thinking around how you might encourage father-inclusion in your own service.



# 21. Recommended reading

The [North East Young Dads](#) and the [Following Young Fathers Further](#) team have been working in collaboration to share and develop evidence about good practice in the support of young fathers. Follow the links to read and hear more about the findings and recommendations from our research, Diverse Dads. A project developed with and for young fathers, including a peer research team, we explored the question of how services can improve support and outreach for young minoritised fathers.



## Videos

### The Diverse Dads webinar (April 2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExQGxZ4yTMM&t=6s>

'I was a Boy who brought a boy into the world' featuring the dads interviewed by the peer research team

[https://youtu.be/Szxb5\\_kAO\\_o](https://youtu.be/Szxb5_kAO_o)

### Interviews with professionals

<https://youtu.be/KexWr3s7W6E>

### The Peer research team

<https://youtu.be/78NynAV0gt4>

### The advisory board members

<https://youtu.be/YBJDeQLOxGE>

### The Following Young Fathers Further team

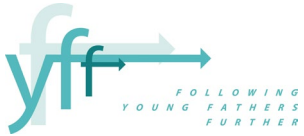
<https://youtu.be/v1VID0Sb0ao>

## Reports

Diverse Dads Collaborative (2021) Researching inclusive support for (young) fathers: A community led study, Full Project Report, University of Lincoln/North East Young Dads and Lads Project, <https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-Diverse-Dads-Researching-inclusive-support-for-young-fathers-A-community-led-study.pdf>

Diverse Dads Collaborative (2021) Researching inclusive support for (young) fathers: A community led study, Recommendations for Services report, University of Lincoln/North East Young Dads and Lads Project., <https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-Diverse-Dads-Researching-inclusive-support-for-young-fathers-Recommendations-for-Services.pdf>





The Following Young Fathers Further team have published a series of briefing papers and reports that are free to access. Follow the links to learn more about the most recent research evidence generated with young fathers.

### Co-authored research article

Way, Laura, Tarrant, Anna, Ladlow, Linzi, York, Jonah, Gorzelanczyk, Adam, Brown, Dylan and Patterson, Will (2022) *Cocreating with Young Fathers: Producing Community-Informed Training Videos to Foster more Inclusive Support Environments*. *Sociological Research Online*, 27 (3). pp. 675-683, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/13607804221090550>

### On what can be learnt from collaborations between researchers and professionals to promote good practice

Tarrant, A. and Neale, B. (2017) *Supporting Young Fathers in Welfare Settings: An Evidence Review of What Matters and What Helps*, Responding to Young Fathers in a Different Way: Evidence Review.

Tarrant, A. and Neale, B. (2017) (eds.) *Learning to Support Young Dads*, Responding to Young Fathers in a Different Way: Project Report.

### Following Young Fathers Further Briefing paper series on the impacts of Covid-19 on young fathers

Briefing Paper One: *Negotiating 'earning' and 'caring' through the COVID-19 crisis: change and continuities in the parenting and employment trajectories of young fathers*, <https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/COVID-19-FYFF-Briefing-Paper-One-Earning-and-Caring.pdf>



Briefing Paper Two: From social isolation to local support: Relational change and continuities for young fathers in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, <https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/COVID-19-FYFF-Briefing-Paper-Two.pdf>

Briefing Paper Three: Supporting at a distance: the challenges and opportunities of supporting young fathers through the COVID-19 pandemic, [https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/COVID-19-Briefing-Paper-Three-Supporting-at-a-distance.pdf\[LW3\]](https://followingyoungfathersfurther.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/COVID-19-Briefing-Paper-Three-Supporting-at-a-distance.pdf[LW3])

### Open access research articles

Tarrant, A., Ladlow, L., Johansson, T., Andreasson, J. and Way, L. (2022) The Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Lockdown Policies on Young Fathers: Comparative Insights from the UK and Sweden, *Social Policy & Society*, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/impacts-of-the-covid19-pandemic-and-lockdown-policies-on-young-fathers-comparative-insights-from-the-uk-and-sweden/53BDCB5217B748D98EA553F0A5BA0125>

Andreasson, J., Tarrant, A., Johansson, T. and Ladlow, L. (2022) Perceptions of gender equality and engaged fatherhood among young fathers: parenthood and family policy in Sweden and the UK, *Families, Relationships and Societies*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1332/204674321X16520100466479>

# 22. Feedback

It is important to us to understand the ways that our work is making a difference! We are very interested in your views – whether you are someone who works with parents or were just curious and had an interest in learning more.

Please do leave us some quick feedback about any of the following:

- What you have learnt?
- Have you made any changes to practice?
- Have you recommended the toolkit to others; who were they?

If you wish to know more about NEYDL's services, including workforce development training, peer research activities and consultancy work, please get in touch via email: [info@neydl.uk](mailto:info@neydl.uk)





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