Following Fathers: The experiences and support needs of young dads
Carmen Lau-Clayton and John May
Background

• YLT aims to explore ‘what matters’ to young people

• Follow the key transition points in the participant’s lives

• Young fathers recruited into the study in 2010 – ‘Following Fathers’

• To better understand the diversity of young people’s lives and experiences
Young father statistics

• A quarter of young fathers are aged under 20, around a half are 20 to 25 and a further quarter are aged over 25 (Swann et al., 2003)

• Young fathers are generally defined as males under the age of 25 (Fatherhood Institute, 2010)

• True extent of young fatherhood remains unknown
Literature

• Risk factors associated with teen fathering

• The impact of teen fatherhood on personal outcomes

• Fatherhood images

• Fathers involvement with their children

• Parenting skills amongst young fathers
Further studies needed

• The voices of young fathers are still not adequately represented

• Lacking qualitative insights

• How the lives of teen fathers unfold over time is unknown

• Limited data on father’s negotiating their dual status as both young people and parents

• Impact of governmental interventions on fathers needs further exploration
Sample and Methods

• 10 fathers

• Aged between 16-22 years old

• Varied circumstances and backgrounds

• Different stages of fatherhood

• Varied levels of access to their children

• In-depth qualitative interviews
Findings to date

1. Identities of young men
2. Father-child relationship
3. Relationship with the child’s mother
4. Cross generational relationships
5. Professional support
Fatherhood identities

- Identities of young fathers are complicated
- Positive experiences
- Sense of loss
- Importance of family
Father-Child Relationships

• Children were the father’s main priority

• Aspirations of good parenting

• ‘New fatherhood’ VS traditional fatherhood roles
Relationship with the child’s mother

- Relationships with the child’s mother were often fragile

- Father-child relationships tend to be mediated initially through the mother

- Relationship breakdown affected fatherhood status and fathering involvement

- Physical, emotional and financial strains resulted for young fathers
Cross generational relationships

- Significance of grandparents
- Tensions between the generations
- Conflicting experience for young fathers
Professional support

- Specialist support crucial

- Flexibility and empathetic approaches were key

- Mixed opinions regarding other professional services

- Surveillance VS support
Specialist Learning Mentor

Background

• Teenage Pregnancy Team Leeds

• Lack of Engagement

• Funding and Partnership
My Experiences

• Young Men

• Professionals

• Dads group
Challenges

- Young Men
- Professionals
- Young Mothers
Policy and practice

- Dissemination
- Champions
- Position Statement
Conclusion

• Working with the risk factors. The Young men are 50% of the solution

• Dispel the Myths around ‘feckless fathers’ and look at the reality ‘feckless professionals’

• Helps to produce a better society
References


