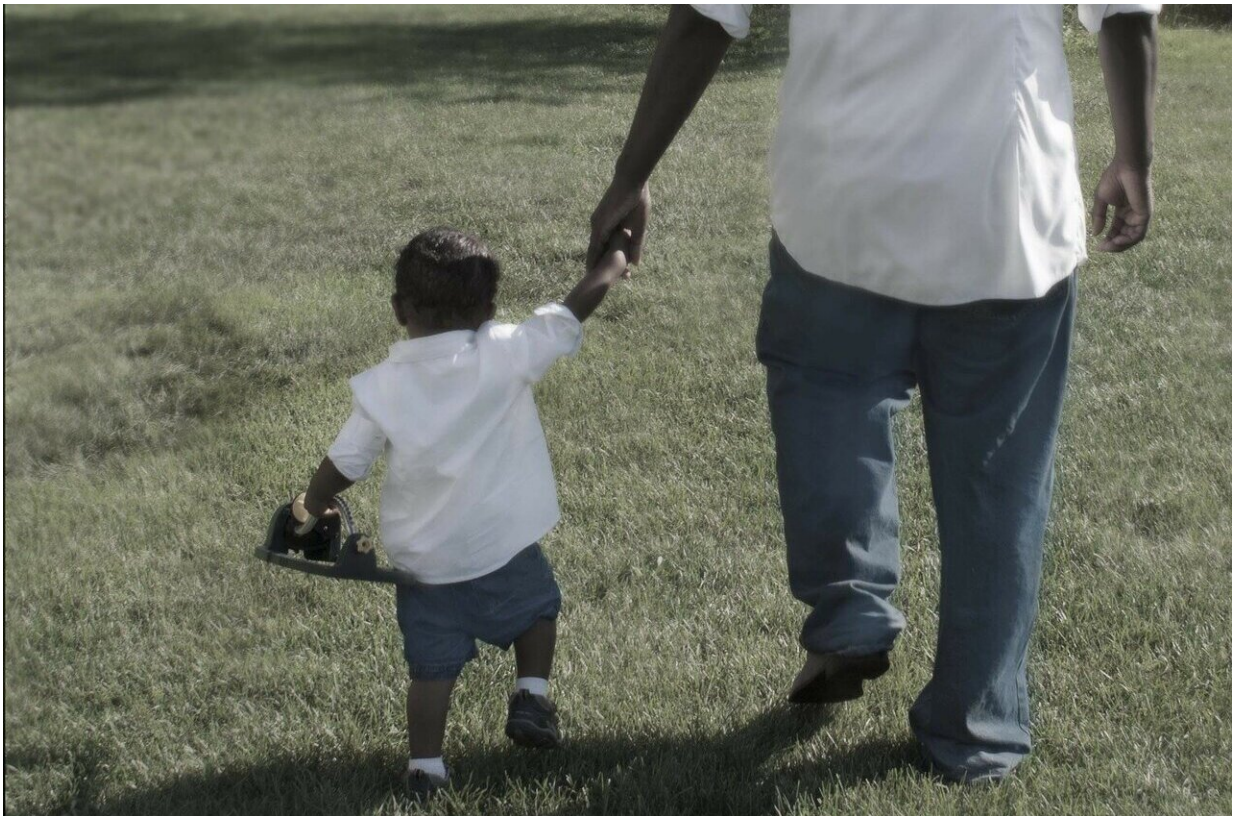


New research challenges young dad stereotypes

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According to common prejudice, fathers below the age of 25 are inherently "risky," uncaring or irresponsible. However, a new research project brings into question popular myths and shows young dads

demonstrating their willingness to engage in support services and advocate for policy change on a national level to introduce more father-inclusive practices.

Dads from deprived areas, are being given a platform to connect with each other, discuss how practice and policy could better accommodate them, and directly present their views to senior level professionals and practitioners.

Anna Tarrant, Professor of Sociology at the University of Lincoln, U.K., is the director of Future Leaders Fellowship study Following Young Fathers Further (FYFF). This project has seen the co-creation of the Young Dads Collective (YDC) in Leeds in 2017 and Grimsby in 2023. The research has been [published](#) in the journal *Families, Relationships and Societies*.

Anna said, "Our engagement with young fathers as 'experts by experience' in areas like Leeds, Grimsby and the North East, more recently, is proving just how invested young fathers are in supporting their children and their families.

"Challenging the societal narrative of the irresponsible young man, the young fathers that are engaging in our research are advocating for themselves, while also educating professionals about the wider social benefits of father-inclusive practice and societies. This is empowering for young fathers, their families and professionals."

To date, the YDC has delivered innovative training on how to integrate father-inclusive practices to over 400 professionals, deriving solutions directly from the fathers' experiences. Some selected young fathers were supported further to participate in national policy discussions at the House of Lords and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Fatherhood.

A young dad from Leeds said he was "buzzing. Love being listened to and it's not just the work with the professionals. It's about meeting up with other dads when we do the planning. We all want other dads to have a better experience."

Anna's research reveals that young fathers are the most marginalized of parents, with [support services](#) including health and [social care](#), statutory and voluntary sectors not typically targeting their demographic. However, following attendance at a YDC workshop, professionals are reportedly gaining an improved understanding of young fathers' commitments to their children.

In addition to campaigning for policy and [practice](#) improvements, the YDC provides young dads with an invaluable platform to connect socially and develop confidence, granting them wider benefits for their citizenship. For example, where none of the fathers were in permanent employment before their involvement in the training, three have now secured paid work and/or training opportunities by being able to evidence their newly acquired skills.

Adam, a participant in FYFF, explained when asked what he gained from the project that "it's just experiences, meeting new people, helping new people. You can't really put a price on it because a lot of dads don't talk with each other and it's just a way to get support from other dads, other people that are in a similar situation to yourselves. Who understand what it's like."

More information: Anna Tarrant, Instigating father-inclusive practice interventions with young fathers and multi-agency professionals: the transformative potential of qualitative longitudinal and co-creative methodologies, *Families, Relationships and Societies* (2023). [DOI: 10.1332/204674321X16913136250482](https://doi.org/10.1332/204674321X16913136250482)

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