

## Diverse Dads: Reaching and supporting minoritised young fathers

A community and peer research study supported by researchers at the University of Lincoln has identified ways in which family support services and professionals can implement more father-inclusive practice and improve outreach and support for minoritised young fathers.

### University of Lincoln research has:

- Found that young fathers often experience a complex range of challenges. Individualised support from services can help them to overcome barriers to participation in the lives of their children.
- Challenged the pervasive myth that some localities are lacking in diversity, which is often a reason used to explain services limited engagements with minoritised young fathers.



#### What is the Diverse Dads project?

'Diverse Dads' is a peer research project that supported young men and dads to address gaps in regional based support and outreach for young dads from minoritised communities. As part of the [Following Young Fathers Further](#) research study, it addressed a gap in knowledge about diversity in young fatherhood.

Young men from a support organisation for young fathers called the North East Young Dads and Lads (NEYDL), conducted a survey and qualitative interviews with young fathers and professionals in the North East region to understand the parenting experiences and support needs of minoritised young dads and to address their marginalisation from mainstream family and specialist support services.

#### The project comprised four key activities:

- Producing a demographic profile of minority ethnic communities in the Tyne and Wear region, including the prevalence of young fatherhood to understand local demographics,
- Establishing new alliances with services who work with minority ethnic communities and young parents to enable outreach, updated training, and the embedding of inclusive forms of support,
- Generating evidence about how and why services should engage with a wider constituency of young fathers, especially those from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds,
- Co-disseminating evidence to professionals and policymakers at a [project webinar](#) and through films created by [DigiDADS](#).

The research also aimed to capture and analyse service provision for young fathers in the North East of England. The project findings offer a rare contribution to the evidence base around effective and inclusive approaches to support for young fathers and their families in ways that are also sensitive to the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

## Key Findings

There is a common assumption among support professionals that young fathers, and especially those from minoritised communities, are either few in number or are 'hard-to-reach'. However, the reason for their lack of engagement with services is often assumed rather than understood.

- Mapping local and regional resources and building new partnerships with community leaders and across services are important steps in identifying young fathers and making services more accessible to them.
- Localities are also often described as lacking in diversity despite limited awareness by professionals and services about local and regional population characteristics.
- Understanding local demographics, mapping local and regional resources and building new partnerships with community leaders and across services are important steps in identifying young fathers and making services more accessible to them.
- Asking mums and female family members about dads is also an underutilised approach used by professionals for finding out about dad.
- Many young fathers are experiencing a complex set of challenges and have a diverse set of needs that may be a barrier to their participation in the lives of their children and with services.

Following Young Fathers Further: <https://fyff.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>  
Contact: Dr Anna Tarrant. [atarrant@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:atarrant@lincoln.ac.uk) Twitter: @FollowingYFF

*Despite notable advances in evidence and academic literature concerning young fathers, we know even less about the experiences of young minoritised fathers (Tarrant and Neale, 2017). Additionally, little is known about their experiences of accessing and being supported by services.*

## Key Findings (cont.)

- Listening actively to young fathers and approaching them with care and compassion rather than with suspicion, enables professionals to better understand them and their circumstances and to provide individual support.
- Some young fathers may be so unaccustomed to asking for, or receiving support, that as a first step to accessing mainstream services they may initially need a tailored approach or culturally relevant specific services, but always with the long-term aim of inclusion in wider services.
- Central to the effective provision of individualised support is the naming and demystifying of issues around diversity. Training in cultural competency and father-inclusive practice is therefore essential to professional development.
- Where fatherhood is a shared experience it can bring men together around a common identity, while also respecting difference and diversity. The need for more inclusive, rather than new, spaces of support for dads from all backgrounds is therefore essential.

## IMPACT ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

The research has the potential to impact on professional practice and policy by:

- Highlighting the need for services to ask about fathers when working with families,
- Showing the value of joined up work between services that have a remit to support fathers and/or minoritised communities,
- Recommending that support services create inclusive spaces for dads rather than new spaces. Tailored support for minoritised young dads when they need it has real potential to improve their engagements with mainstream services.