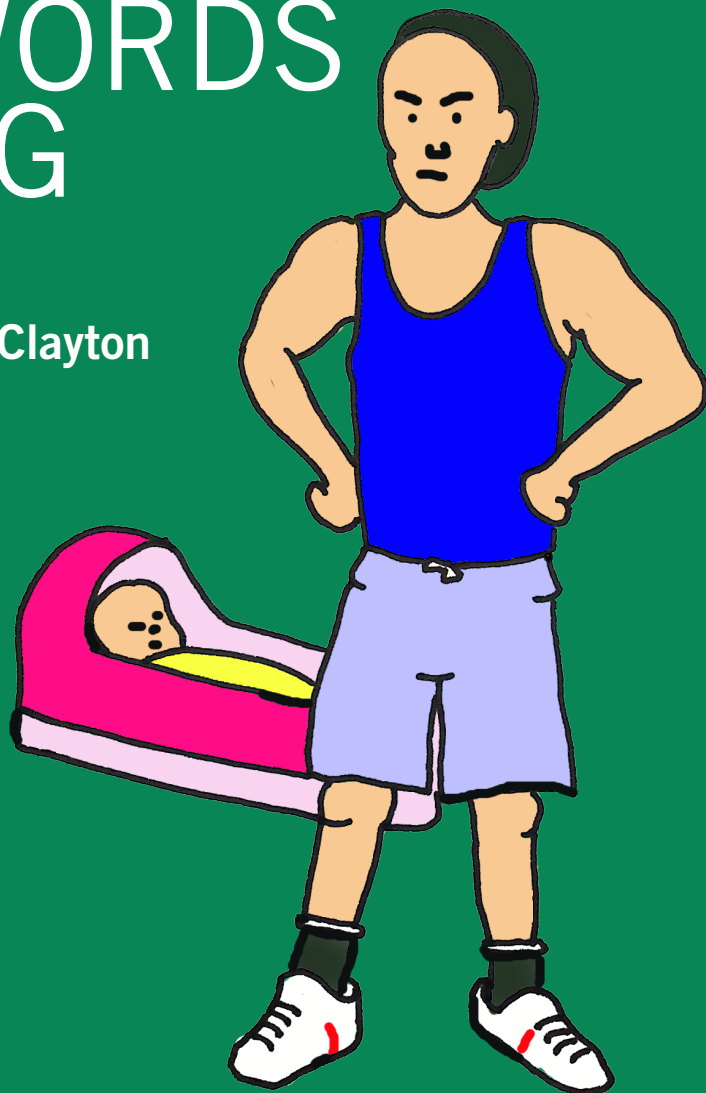




UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

# BEING A YOUNG DAD IN THE WORDS OF YOUNG FATHERS

Compiled by Carmen Lau Clayton



E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL



BOOK 2

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# BEING A YOUNG DAD

In the Words of Young Fathers



This booklet is a collection of personal experiences and genuine quotes from a group of 31 young dads who took part in a research study called Following Young Fathers over a 2-4 year period at the University of Leeds. It acts as a fun, informative and accessible resource for a range of practitioners who wish to discuss complex and sometimes sensitive issues concerning early fatherhood.

"Being a Young Dad" is the second of the three volumes and reveals the reflections of the young fathers as they adjust into the life of parenthood. This transitional period brings new joys and challenges in their day to day lives as parents, whilst planning futures for themselves and their children.

The compilation of all three booklets offers a holistic picture of young fatherhood from the moment of the conception onwards, but each of the three volumes can also be used as a resource on their own depending on the young man's context. We have also included selected interview quotes from professionals who took

part in this study to share their experience of working with young fathers and young people.

The booklets demonstrate the young fathers' commitment to their children and desire to 'be there', helping to challenge the negative stereotypes of young fathers which are often seen in today's society. This resource is suitable for children of all ages, and may also be of benefit to the families and friends of young fathers to help them understand the day to day experiences and expectations of young fatherhood.

The research team would like to extend their thanks to all the young fathers who contributed to the study, and also to the practitioners who helped in the research. Thanks also go to the ESRC for funding this project (ESRC grant number ES J022993/1).

The Following Young Fathers Team  
(Carmen, Bren, Laura and Linzi)

# JOBS AND EDUCATION

"Before this happened, I'd had aspirations of what I wanted to do, but I feel quite trapped at [the] moment and sort of confined by circumstance and it's just a bit frustrating"

**Dominic (Aged 18)**



"It's hard, is the best word to describe it. As I'm at college and all that lot, I've just got loads of stuff going on. I've got a flat, I've got basically no money. I'm trying to do good in me life and all that lot, and everything piling on top. It's a lot of pressure to me. And it's hard to deal with but you just gotta pick yourself up ain't you"

**Callum (Aged 19)**

"I think it sets a bar, you want your kid to see you succeed in life, you want to be a decent role model for him...I need to get a good job, I need to move somewhere in my life, I need to get somewhere in my life that I'm happy with. I want my son to be able to think my dad's amazing he's working"

**Adam (Aged 16)**

"I think that the young fathers who we work with are still at the stage of sorting out who they are, but their own identity is not fully clarified"

**Family Support Manager**

# JOBS AND EDUCATION<sup>CONT.</sup>

"I definitely intend to go to college. The problem is while I'm not working I could only do a part time college course because there's no funding which is a bit of a step back. You can't do a full time college course. Well you could but you'd get no support or no funding. So it'd be quite difficult"

**Jason (Aged 21)**

"So many people are applying but there's hardly any jobs out there, it's like me against however many other people and the chances are, their CVs are probably going to be better than mine"

**Jimmy (Aged 16)**

"A lot of the dads I've worked with have said that the reality of being a parent didn't really hit home until they saw their baby and then it's a bit of a shock to the system really"

**Family Nurse**





# GETTING HELP

“School and connexions and the specialist learning mentor, they’ve been a massive, massive influence and helped me to be where I am right now to be honest. And I’m always grateful for that...So they made me feel comfortable and safe that I’m alright when I’ve got a kid. They give me that reassurance, made me feel better in myself even though I’ve done something like that in my young age, they’ve given me that assurance that everything will be alright”

**Senwe (Age 16)**



“I was eighteen. It was a lot to deal with at that age. But the support from my family was brilliant. My mum, she helped me find work. She was asking around for me. My dad as well, he was the same. I’m thankful for them for that”

**Kevin (Aged 24)**

“Sterilising milk, changing bums. That sort of basic stuff I learnt from the Family Nurse Partnership...I would have been a lot less prepared. I wouldn’t even know how to change a bum”

**Adam (Aged 16)**

“Probation helped a lot. They were all good to me cause I did breach quite a few times and they never breached me for it...They knew I had a kid on the way, and because they thought I wanted to change, so they just really wanted to see me get through it cause they knew I wasn’t offending, it was just my tag that was bothering me”

**Jax (Aged 18)**

“(Some young fathers) don’t know what they can expect, or should expect from the services that are out there”

**Family Support Manager**

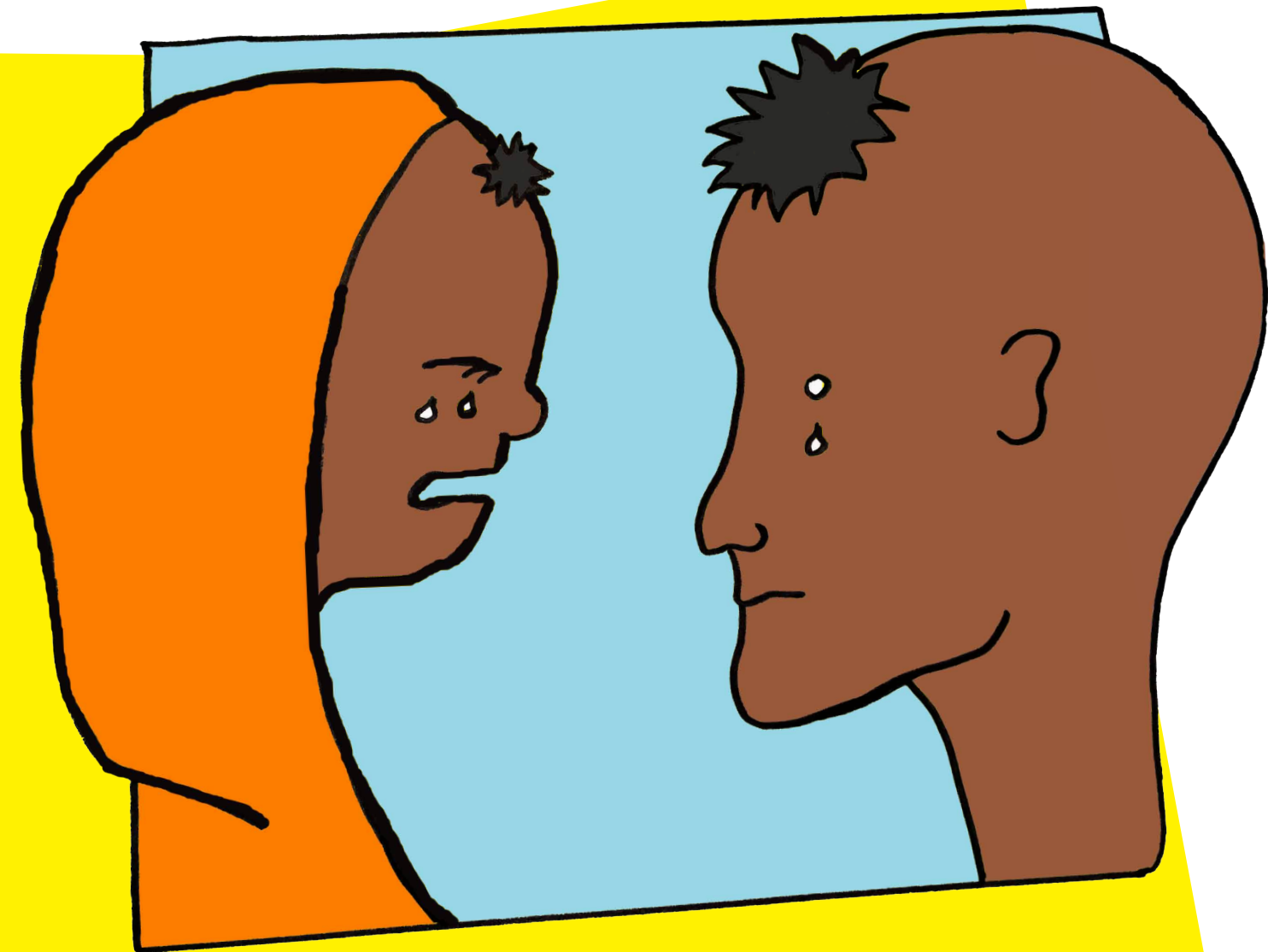
# GETTING HELP<sub>CONT.</sub>

“When my son was born, we went to hospital and he had to have all these things done to him. They were just constantly speaking to the mother...and I was left in [the] dark, the nurse just said it's easier and she's mum after all and all this...Nobody told me about anything. And I said, 'why is this?' And I never got an answer”

**Jason (Aged 21)**

“I occasionally felt they were a little disrespectful. The midwife treated both of us as if we were just stupid kids”

**Ben (Aged 20)**



“They just come up against a system where he sort of puts his foot in it cause he doesn't know how else to do it”

**Secure Training Centre Nurse**

“Some young fathers are really good at accessing support and really want to go the whole hog, to do as many courses as they can”

**Connexions Young Parent Specialist**

# FRIENDS

"One of the biggest challenges for me was staying away from my mates. Because I used to get in a lot of trouble with my mates and we used to take drugs and party all time...But obviously I had to stop that for myself and my daughter. I didn't want to go back to jail, so, I wanted to stop taking drugs, and being an idiot basically. There's a time to grow up, isn't there"

**Jax (Aged 18)**



"I used to go out every Saturday after we'd played rugby and go to the pub...I go out very rarely now with my friends...I haven't lost my friends but I aren't as close to them any more"

**Jock (Aged 22)**

"Sometimes you don't get to see your mates as much, but all my mates are idiots anyway so it didn't really bother me, I'd rather spend time with my son"

**Jed (Aged 16)**

"I couldn't go out with all my mates because I had a child to look after. So while they were all out like having a laugh, I was at home looking after a baby. That was probably one of the things I missed the most. Like they all eventually start to forget about you 'cause you haven't been out so long. And then when they do see you, they don't really interact with you because you're going to be gone again to look after your kid"

**Jimmy (Aged 16)**



# GRANDPARENTS

"My dad didn't talk to me for a year or something"

**Jayden (Aged 21)**



"My mum, I don't speak to her as much, she only calls me when she wants something or a favour. I don't like the way she is. And then if she calls me, she won't ask about the baby. Last time I saw her was one year ago"

**Manuel (Aged 18)**

"She used to do everything for [the baby]. Like watch him all the time whenever we needed her to and that. But now she's started this big argument. She's not a good mum or grandma"

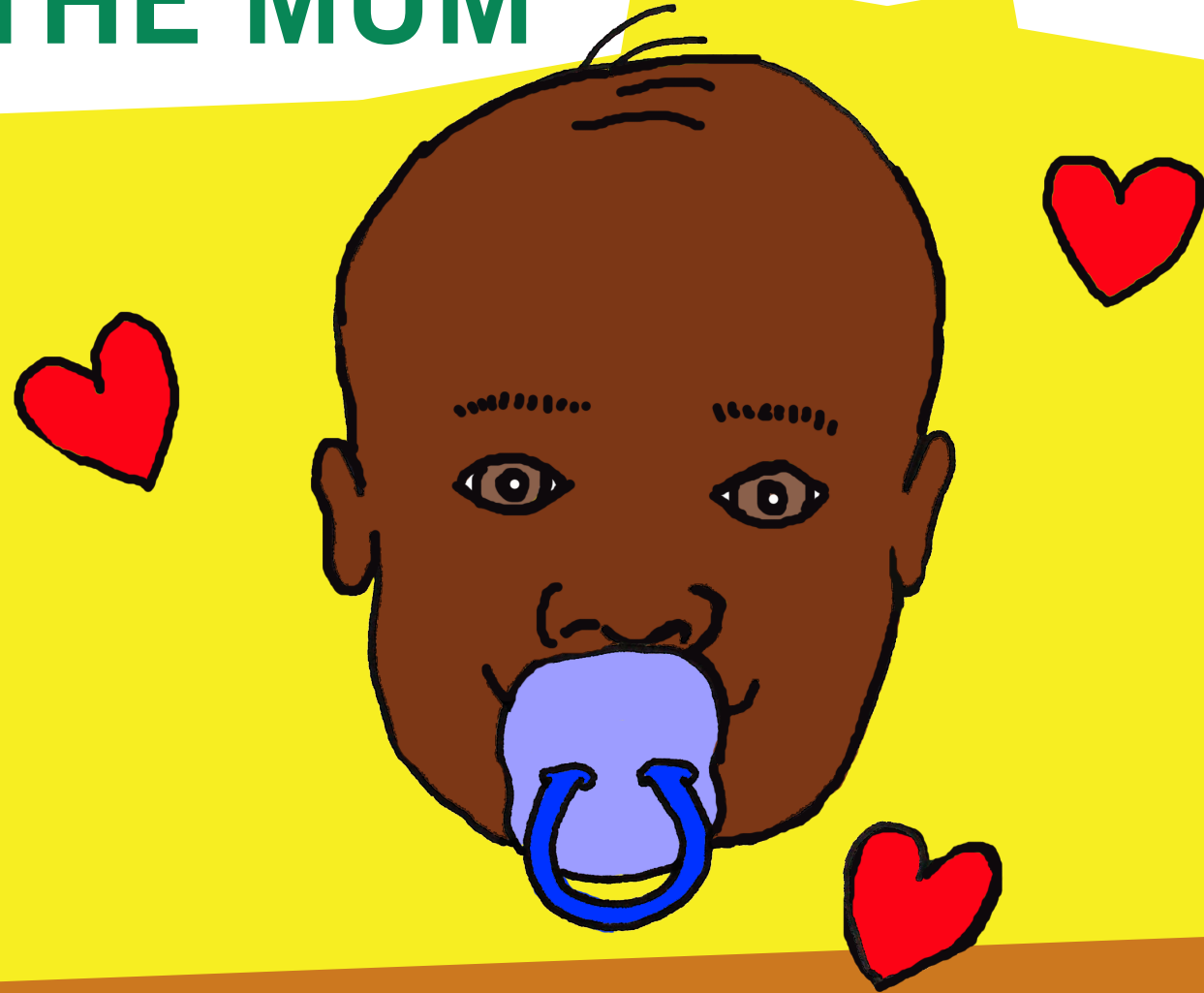
**Jimmy (Aged 16)**



"See my dad, he helps me out with money"

**Darren (Aged 21)**

# RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MUM



"We've grown up and we've stopped being pathetic and stopped arguing cause it's not nice for our daughter either"

**Jax (Aged 18)**

"She's got every say. I've got no power whatsoever"

**Jason (Aged 21)**

"The relationship is pretty important, so you don't end up going through court and fighting over the child and what not. You can come to some sort of arrangement. You don't have to fall out"

**Jimmy (Aged 16)**

"Before you were just girlfriend and boyfriend, we're kind of separate. But now we're probably more conjoined, you're going for this common goal"

**Zane (Aged 18)**

"We do everything like equally to be honest. So it's pretty fair. We both feed her, we both change her. We both play with her and take her out and stuff. We both read her stories before she goes to bed as well which she seems to quite like at the minute"

**Joe (Aged 17)**

"Research shows that the main indicator of whether or not a father stays in touch with a child is the relationship with the mother"

**Young Fathers' Nurse**

# SEPARATED RELATIONSHIPS

"I really struggled at first because I have such a strong bond with my son that it's very difficult to be away from him. Because she's not a very hands on mother, I did his morning routine, his bedtime routine. I did all the routines, the feeding. Even from being a little baby I done all that. And then to have those routines just ripped away because of a stupid lifestyle choice she'd made, I'd just felt that's what hurt me the most, the fact that she put her own needs before my son's"

**Tommy (Aged 24)**

"I felt like that I was trying to be there and trying to have a say in certain things but she's not wanting that and it's like she wanted to be a single mother and not to have a father in the kid's life. I thought it was just very silly and immature"

**Iman (Aged 16)**

"My ex-partner's got a partner now and she's got her own place with him and my son's living there, I don't even know where it is, but I know that they're there"

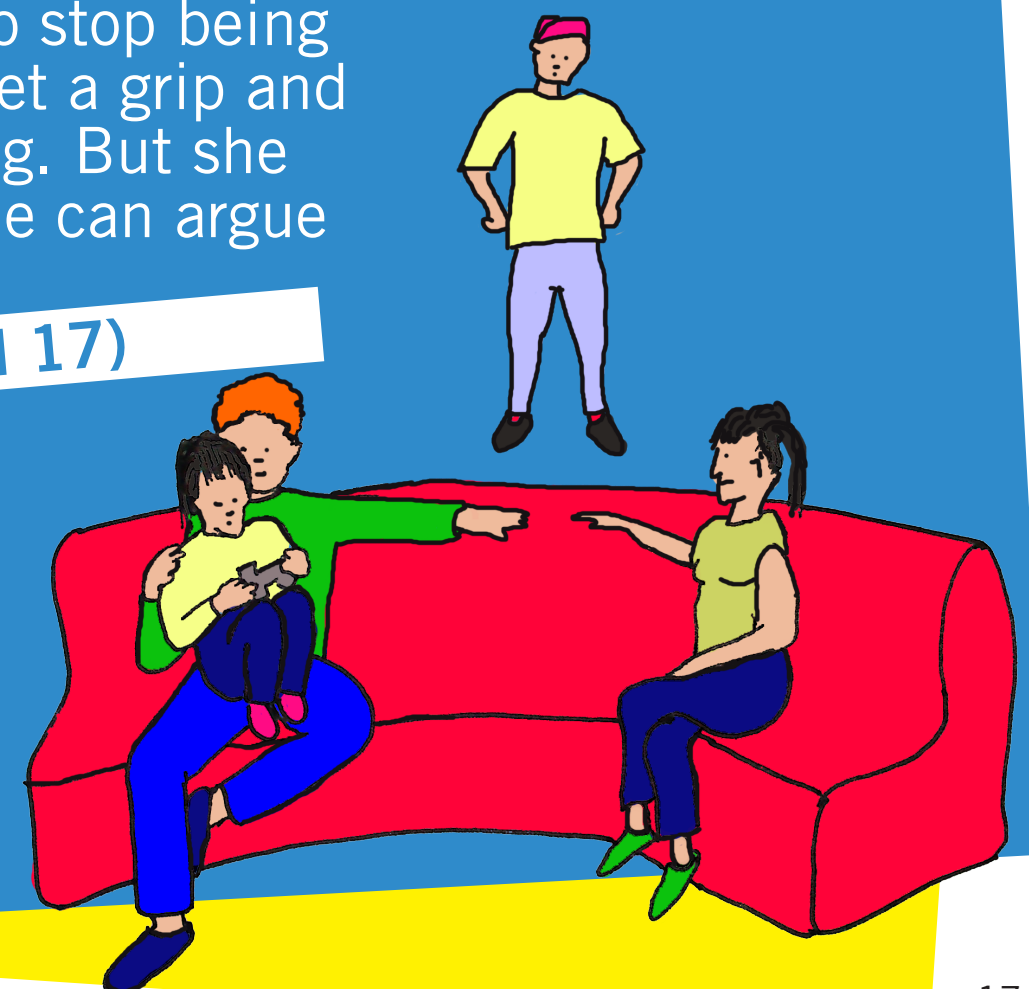
**Trevor (Aged 15)**

"She only rings me when she wants money and it's not on. It's not nice, it's not polite. I'll pay the child benefits, I've been paying that since I was young and I still haven't seen my kids yet"

**Tarrell (Aged 20)**

"My mum takes control of meeting up and picking up my daughter and stuff. So that's a really big help...My ex-partner doesn't want to argue with my mum cause she knows my mum will just tell her straight, tell her to stop being stupid, get a grip and everything. But she knows she can argue with me"

**Peter (Aged 17)**





# THE LAW

"I think my girlfriend has the most say because she's the mother. Like social care looks at mothers being the primary carer and fathers being secondary, just for the fact that the mothers held the baby for nine months. I understand that. I understand the bond. Couldn't imagine it really, holding the baby for nine months. But the bond with the father is still there and that's what I think they're missing out 'cause they're looking at the primary carer too much"

**Trevor (Aged 15)**

"But now my ex partner's stopped me from seeing him. So at the moment I'm missing out on a bit of his life. For the time being till I go to court...I just want to put things aside for our son. But she's not wanting that...She was letting me see him when I didn't have no one and as soon as I got with someone she just said, 'no you're not seeing him no more'"

**Jed (Aged 16)**

"I want to try to be civil with her again. I'm not going to lie. Obviously I love her; she's had my first child. But I'm not going to wait for her to make her mind up and say that she wants this from me to see my own daughter. So I'd rather get my access legally and have her hate me forever than wait for her to click her fingers and say, 'oh you can see baby now'"

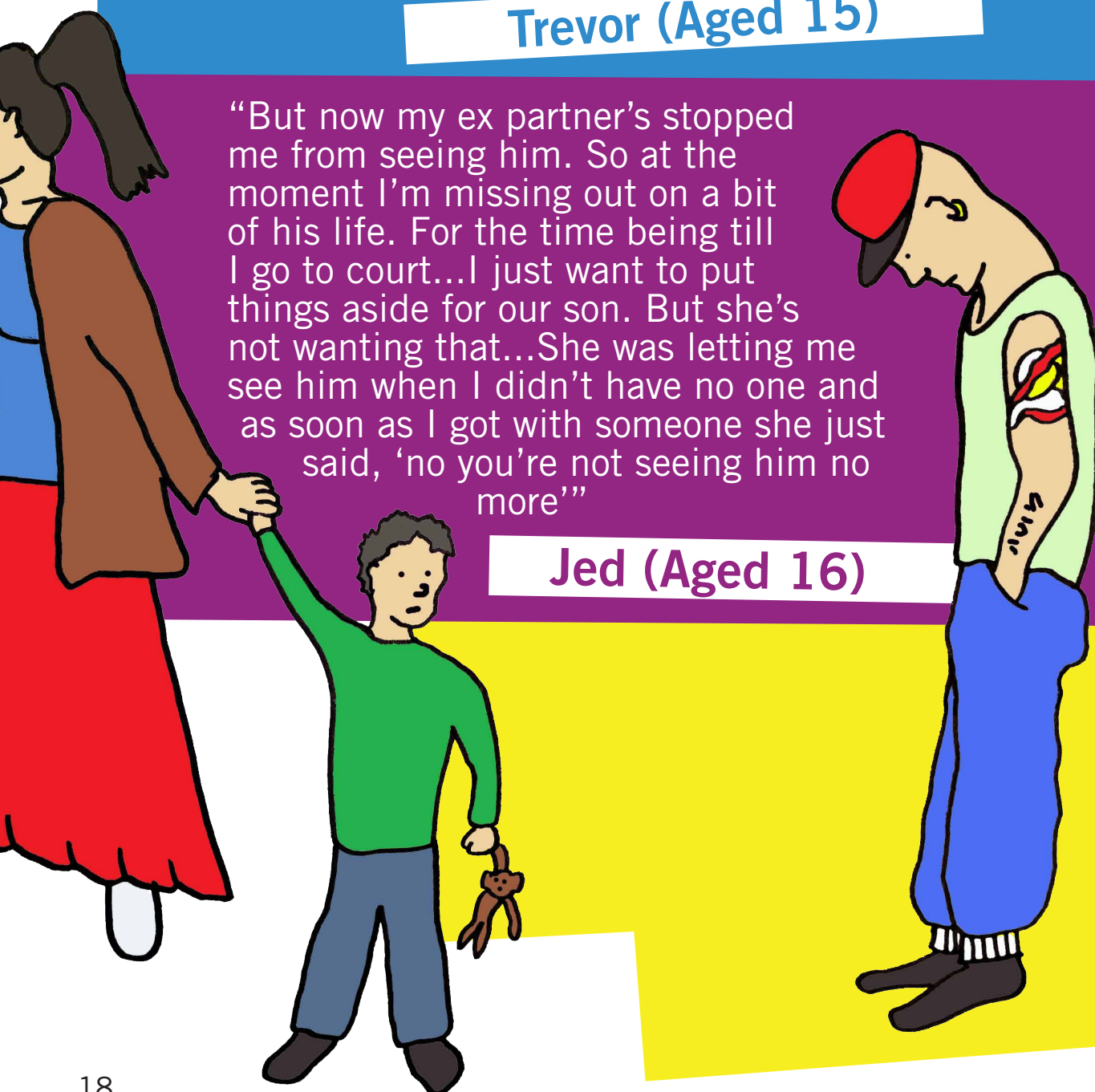
**Trevor (Aged 15)**

"I just always knew about solicitors. You just know that you can fight anything through court can't you. But also my family members told me because they all obviously understand that you can't use a child as a weapon...[But] they give all the mothers the power and then take all the help away from the father. That's how I'm seeing it. Like I don't expect freebies and stuff but they just took away legal aid...So there'll be loads of fathers that can't go to court or they're scared to go to court alone. Like I couldn't just go and stand up in court"

**Jason (Aged 21)**

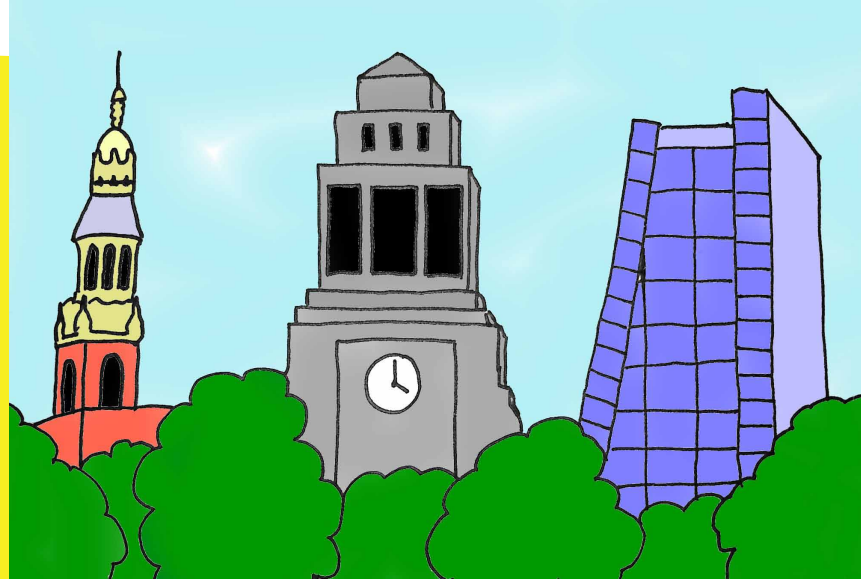
"I've been going to court now for nearly three years, I think. And for that long, I think I'm just used to it now. But it's still tough, you just get your thoughts and you, you know, you have your bad days. And you just, yeah it gets you down. But yeah I'm a fighter"

**Callum (Aged 19)**





# ABOUT THE STUDY AND RESEARCH TEAM



The Following Young Fathers research team: Carmen Lau Clayton, Bren Neale, Laura Davies, Linzi Ladlow and Ruth Patrick.

These findings were produced as part of the Following Young Fathers study, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant no. ES J022993/1). The original baseline study was conducted between 2010 and 2012. The follow up study was conducted between 2012 and 2015. Further details of the research can be found

on the project website [www.followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk/here](http://www.followingfathers.leeds.ac.uk/here). Interviews were conducted by Carmen Lau Clayton (young fathers), Laura Davies (practitioners) and Linzi Ladlow (sub-sample of custodial young fathers).

For further information about the themes of this paper contact Dr Carmen Lau Clayton (School of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Leeds, [c.lau-clayton@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.lau-clayton@leeds.ac.uk)) or

Professor Bren Neale (School of Sociology & Social Policy, University of Leeds, [b.neale@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:b.neale@leeds.ac.uk)).

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**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

School of Sociology and Social Policy  
University of Leeds  
Leeds, UK  
LS2 9JT  
+44 (0) 113 343 5049  
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