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REFLECTIONS ON YOUNG FATHERHOOD IN THE WORDS OF YOUNG FATHERS

Compiled by
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BOOK 3

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REFLECTIONS ON YOUNG FATHERHOOD

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.

“Reflections on Young Fatherhood” is the third of the three volumes. Here the fathers in the study share their thoughts about what they have done well, the lessons they learned, and they offer advice to other young people about the prospect of young parenthood.

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

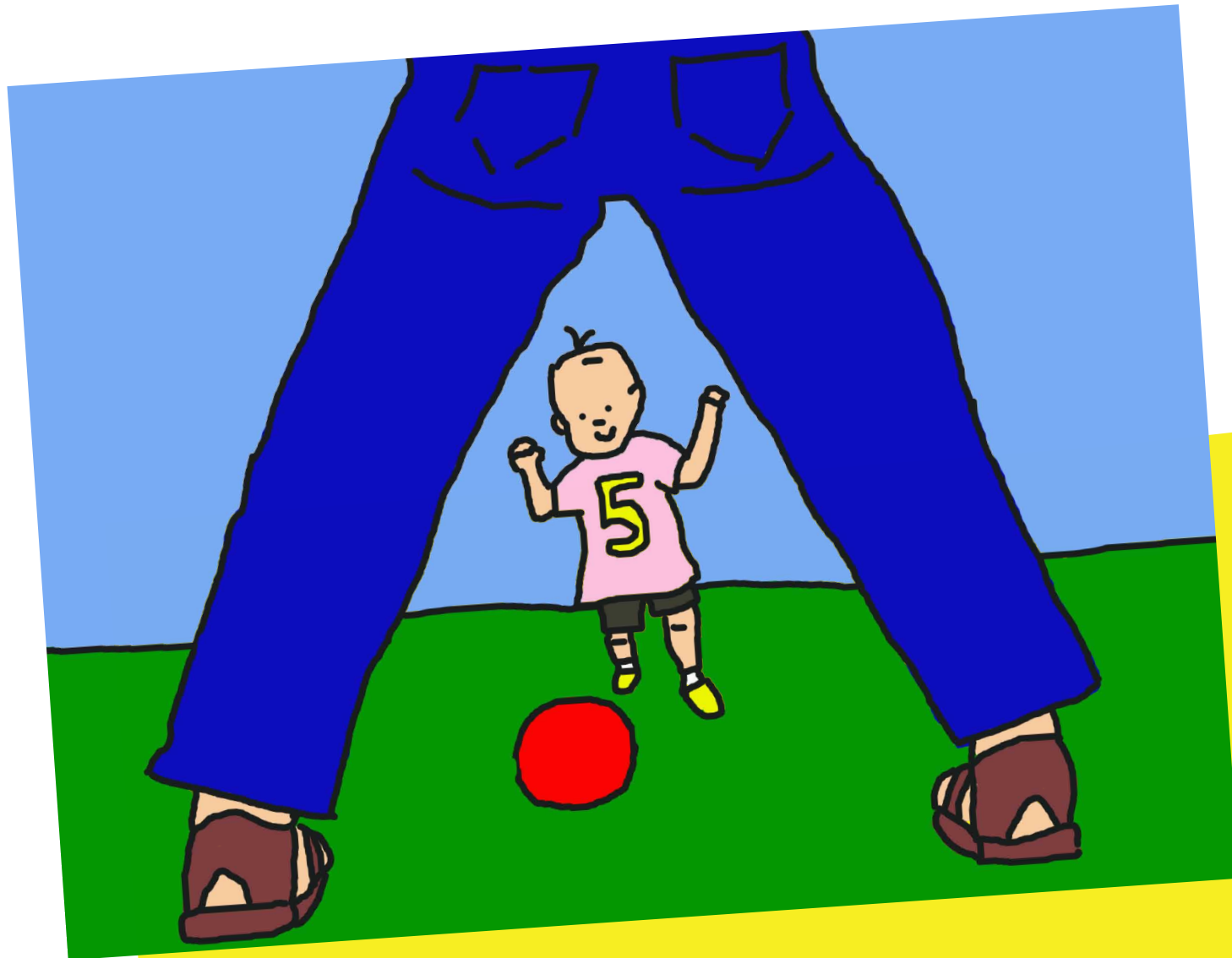
part in this study to share their experience of working with young fathers and young people.

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)

BEING A GOOD DAD



“Best buds. We are good mates, we kick a ball about, sit there talk, play games. Drink the occasional can of coke...I’d definitely do anything for my son”

Adam (Aged 16)

“I’m trying to protect my kids from all the negativity in the world that goes on because the world is sadly a bad place”

Iman (Aged 16)

“When you see him smiling, running about playing, you know that they must be well looked after and you’re doing like a pretty good job”

Jimmy (Aged 16)

BEING A BETTER DAD



"I'm a lot nicer. I need to grow up now. To knuckle down, need good grades to get a decent job because I've got to provide for the little one now...I used to just think, 'yeah you only live once, do what you want'. But now it's knuckle down time...Because if I'm on the dole, what's that going to get my little boy, nothing. But like if I got a decent job I can get him new football boots, do what he wants to do cause that's what he's going to be nagging for. And he's always going to look up to me for it...Like I used to be fighting all the time, getting in trouble with the police, and if I could change it, I would because it's not nice knowing that it's happened. And same for school, mucking about in school, that's not got me nowhere. But I'm glad I'm back in school cause I need to be"

Jed (Aged 16)

"I forgot to change his bum at one point and he ended up with a nappy rash and that wasn't nice because I'd forgotten to change him. I was like, 'two minutes, I need to go do your bottle'"

Adam (Aged 16)

"I want to provide for my daughter rather than sponging off my mum or waiting for [welfare] benefits to come in"

Senwe (Aged 16)

"Yeah it was, learning on the job...A few times I've mucked up changing the nappy, put the nappy on the wrong way round. Bottles too warm, sometimes not warm enough. Yeah all sorts of little things you might not get the first time round"

Kevin (Aged 24)

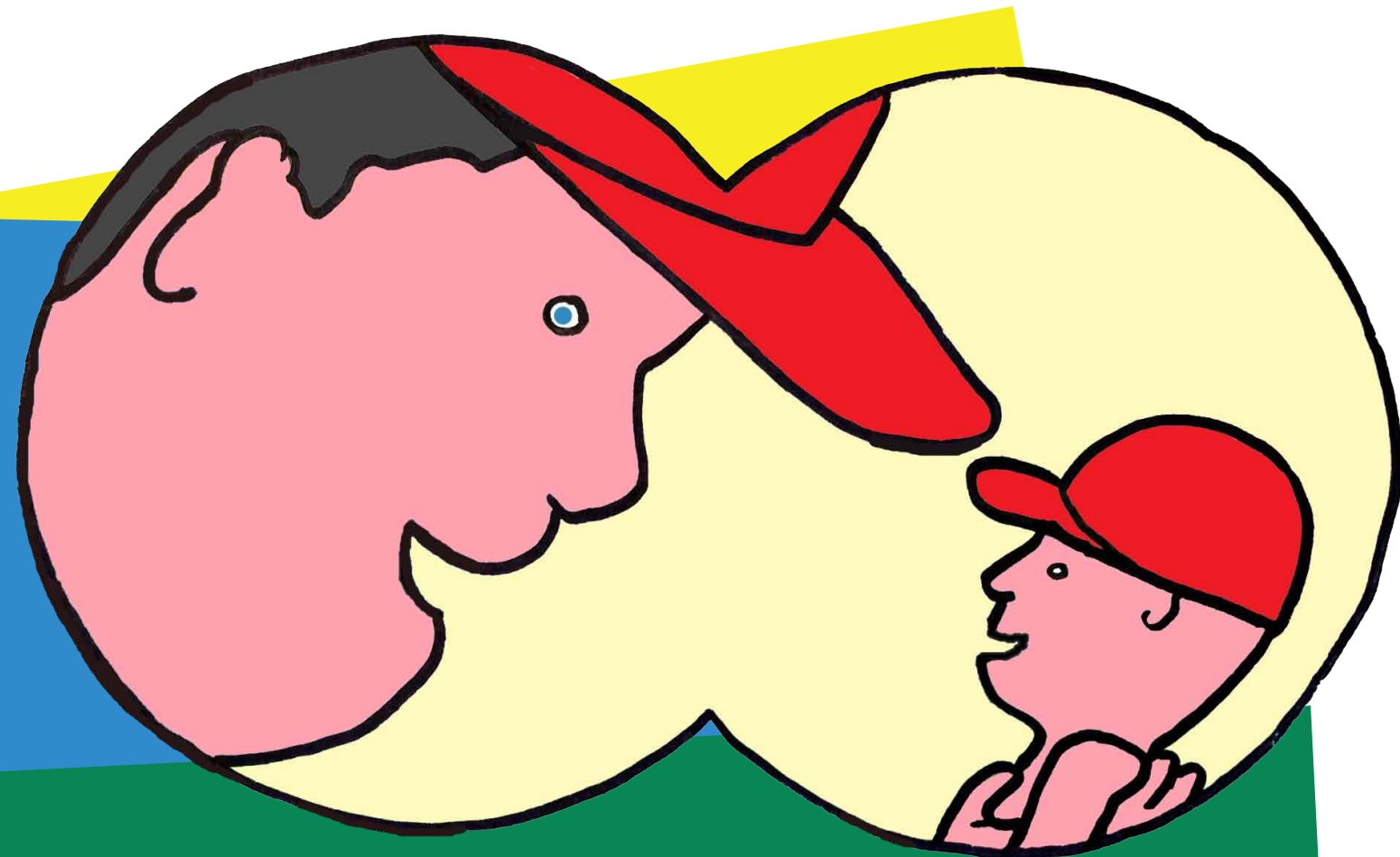
LOOKING BACK

"If I could go back in time, I would love to be able to tell my eighteen year old self how happy I'd be with my daughter at this time. I don't think I would change anything"

Ben (Aged 20)

"I feel this real sense of responsibility that I have to be successful at something, to make life as easy as possible for my partner and son. It is quite a burden in fairness...Like you've got this weight on your shoulder to do that, so yeah...Generally I think I do an okay job. Like I don't want to say for eighteen I'm a good dad because I don't think that age comes into it. You're defined by what you are right!"

Zane (Aged 18)



"When I was a bit younger when I wanted a kid, I didn't really think of the consequences of getting up late at night or not being able to go out with your friends and stuff"

Cade (Aged 21)

ADVICE TO POTENTIAL YOUNG FATHERS

"Like when you think about a little baby, you think of a little baby smiling and being asleep and looking all cute. You don't see it at three o'clock in the morning screaming its head off for a bottle and then again at six o'clock and then again at nine o'clock and you having no sleep at all. You're proper tired and it's making you and your partner argue, and I think that anyone who's looking to have a kid young, should just totally not do it"

Jax (Aged 18)

"It's challenging, it's exciting, it's interesting. It makes you proud. It makes you tired. It keeps you busy. It makes you a family. It makes you feel like you are a family"

Martin (Aged 23)

"People think, 'oh it'll be nice to have a little kid, awww', when it's far from that, there's always big expectations and stuff...Both of you sit down and just think about it and talk through how things are going to go"

Senwe (Aged 16)

"It's better to have kids when you are older or at a certain age where you are stable. Cause if not you'll end up with loads of problems. And it's better off if you get your own place, and a proper girlfriend that lives with you"

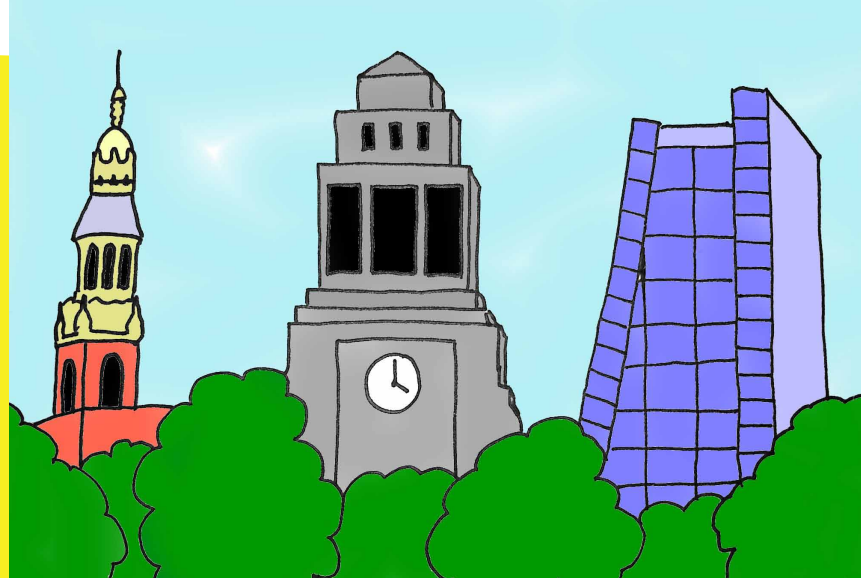
Tarrell (Aged 21)

"I would probably say try and enjoy yourself. It is a real challenge but think of things in the bigger picture when you are really tired and you feel like you are going to fall asleep. You'll probably look back and be proud that you've done this thing, wash away with the stereotypes and the people who say you can't do things. Just ignore them"

Zane (Aged 18)



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. Interviews were conducted by Carmen Lau Clayton (young fathers), Laura Davies (practitioners) and Linzi Ladlow (sub-sample of custodial young fathers).

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