



Supporting Teen Fathers

A resource for service providers



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora



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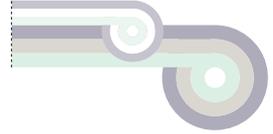
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Parenting is a difficult job at any age, and being a teen parent can be particularly challenging. Teen parent services have often overlooked teen fathers. We want young dads to be responsible and nurturing parents, so it's vital they receive effective support and guidance.

We're offering more support to these young men to help them become the fathers their children need them to be.

The success of New Zealand's teen father support services depends on the open sharing of advice, experience and expertise. *Supporting Teen Fathers* provides ideas for community-based services to help them provide support to teen fathers, their children, families and whānau. It reflects the experiences of teen fathers and builds on the work that providers are already doing across New Zealand. There are some great suggestions here for groups thinking about providing services to teenage fathers.

A big thank you to all those who have given their time and knowledge to develop this booklet, particularly the working group of service providers, researchers and teen fathers who shared their expertise with the Ministry of Social Development:

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Without you we couldn't have started this journey towards more effective services for teen fathers in New Zealand.



Hon Paula Bennett
Minister for Social Development and Employment

Purpose of this booklet

This booklet has been developed to support the delivery of services for teen fathers. In this publication, 'teen fathers' includes those young fathers who are no longer teenagers, but who need the same kinds of support. This could include young fathers who are the partners of teen mothers.

This booklet can be used by:

- providers thinking about setting up a teen father service
- providers of other services who want to be more inclusive of teen fathers
- providers of existing teen father services who are interested in what others are doing.

The booklet is a starting point for sharing practice, recognising the expertise and knowledge of those working with teen fathers will develop over time. It will also be a key resource for Community Response Forums as they plan effective services for teen fathers.

Why teen father services are needed

Research suggests young New Zealanders are often hesitant to use mainstream support services. They perceive them as being unwelcoming, inappropriate or unsuitable.¹ Some young people describe barriers to their use, such as cost, embarrassment, lack of knowledge about services, time and hassle, and problems establishing a rapport with staff. Overall, young people see mainstream services as not being youth-friendly.²

Teen fathers may experience additional barriers to using support services. They may fear being stigmatised or criticised, may believe they do not need the help of a service, or may be reluctant to accept their role as a parent.³ New Zealand research shows teen fathers feel isolated from support and advice about being a father, and they have been neglected by services.⁴ This suggests services need to better identify and address the particular needs of teen fathers.

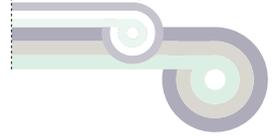
How the booklet is organised

Part 1 of the booklet outlines what is known about teen fathers in New Zealand, including their characteristics and needs. It discusses the roles fathers play, and the cultural context of being a father in New Zealand.

Part 2 covers things to consider when developing services for teen fathers:

- finding out about teen fathers in your community
- considering effective approaches to supporting teen fathers
- recognising the importance of identity, mana, whakapapa and whanaungatanga
- providing parenting support services to teen fathers
- supporting teen fathers with other areas of their lives
- deciding how to deliver services
- selecting people to work with teen fathers
- getting teen fathers involved and keeping them engaged
- creating environments that are teen father friendly
- working with families and whānau
- working with other services
- monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on practice.

Part 3 contains five profiles of providers currently delivering services to teen fathers in New Zealand.



What each section covers

Each section of this booklet brings together:

- what research says about effective support for teen fathers
- the practical expertise of people who are currently providing services to teen fathers
- the voices of teen fathers themselves
- suggestions of things for services to think about
- lists of resources and references that provide further information on the topics covered.

New Zealand research is used where possible but, as there is currently little New Zealand research on teen fathers, most of the research included is from overseas. Interviews were also conducted with two New Zealand researchers.

The practice sections of the booklet are based on interviews with 16 New Zealand service providers. The providers include those who deliver services exclusively for teen fathers, those who support teen fathers as part of their broader work, and those whose services focus on teen mothers but who also work with teen fathers.

The booklet also reflects what New Zealand teen fathers say about their own experiences of fatherhood and of support services. This is based on interviews with young men who became fathers as teenagers.

Interview process

All interview participants signed consent forms to indicate their agreement to an interview. Following the interview, participants were given the opportunity to make any amendments to the notes from their interview, and to provide consent for the inclusion of their quotes in the booklet. Participants were also asked to choose how they wished to be identified in the booklet. Some chose to be identified by their name, while others chose to be included as 'researcher' or 'service provider' only.



Teen fathers in New Zealand

This section provides an overview of data and research on New Zealand teen fathers, including their characteristics and needs. It also discusses the roles of fathers and the different meanings attached to being a father in New Zealand.

New Zealand has the second highest rate of teen births in developed countries, with 4,670 births to women aged 19 years or under in 2009. A complex set of social and historical factors contribute to this high teen birth rate.

While much is known about teen mothers, less is known about teen fathers. It is difficult to estimate how many there are, because not all fathers appear on their children's birth certificates, and not all fathers live with their children.

Most of the information available on the numbers of teen fathers comes from births data. As shown in the table below, in 2009:

- there were 2,251 births where the father was a teenager – 1,665 children were born to teen mothers, and 586 were born to older mothers
- there were 2,216 births to teen mothers where the father was older.



As men who have fathered children to teen mothers are often older, there are considerably fewer teen fathers than teen mothers. In 2009, 36 per cent of all children born to teen mothers had a father aged under 20 years and 47 per cent had a father aged 20 years or over. For the remaining 17 per cent, the age of the father was not known.

Births by age of father and mother, 2009

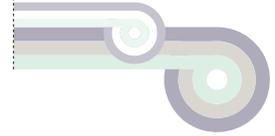
Age of father and mother	Number of births
Father under 20, mother under 20	1,665
Father under 20, mother 20+	586
Father 20+, mother under 20	2,216
Father's age not stated, mother under 20	789
Total births where father known to be under 20	2,251
Total births to mothers under 20	4,670

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The personal circumstances of teen fathers are wide-ranging. Some live with their partners, children, and perhaps wider family and whānau. Some are step-fathers, and some are sole fathers. Others are separated from their children's mothers and may have limited contact with their children.

Becoming a father has the potential to have a profound and positive impact on men. This effect can be particularly significant for teen fathers, who often embrace their new role with enthusiasm and energy. Some teen fathers, however, come from disadvantaged backgrounds. These fathers may not have the support or the resources they need to be the kinds of fathers they would like to be, or to manage the often complex issues affecting their own, and their children's, lives.

Social and cultural views shape the age at which young men are seen as being ready to become fathers, or the age at which becoming a father is considered a legitimate and acceptable thing to do. In some settings, it is usual for men to become fathers at a young age. In others, men are expected to follow a conventional route to fatherhood, such as completing formal education and becoming established in careers before taking on the responsibilities of caring for children.



“At the end of the day, it’s good to be called a father. It gives you not only a title, but it becomes who you are.”
– Abdalla , refugee teen father

Becoming a father as a teenager is not always viewed in a positive light. Teen fathers often experience stigma and discrimination. Some people may assume a teen father will show little interest in his children, and may blame him for the pregnancy. Teen fathers may not appear on the birth certificate, or be excluded from caring for their children. Some teen fathers do not acknowledge their paternity.

“Many fathers feel unsupported by society. They feel they’re regarded as ‘no-hopers’ and ‘deadbeat fathers’. Those kinds of labels make them feel put down by society rather than appreciated.” – researcher

“People think: ‘He’s young. He can’t be a good dad.’ I’ve got people assuming I’m off getting drunk every night.”
– Ryan, teen father

“You do feel judged by other people. Anything you do they look at in the worst light. Or it could be that we expect to be judged so we interpret it in that way... that social stigma can really get to you. You get the odd mutter, or the half-heard criticism.” – Brian, teen father

“My partner wants to be a midwife and she got a job in the hospital, which was a great experience for her. I was a stay-at-home dad, so I could support her dream. It was really cool, but I did feel judged a lot. I had people saying, ‘You should have a job. It should be the other way around’.”
– Ryan, teen father

Teen fathers are not an homogeneous group, and their circumstances vary widely. Research shows, however, that teenagers who become fathers are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are more likely to have low socio-economic status and low participation in education and/or employment.⁵ New Zealand research indicates that young men who father a child as a teenager are more likely to have been born to a teenage mother, have lived with a single mother, have begun sexual activity early, have a history of conduct problems, and have planned to leave school early.⁶ The links between these factors are complex; none of these factors lead inevitably to teen fatherhood, nor are they experienced by all teen fathers.

New Zealand research also shows that, despite experiencing a range of disadvantages, for many young men becoming a father can have a transformative effect on their identity.⁷ These men

often show the willingness and capacity to rearrange their lives, take on a new role as parents, and help their children avoid the mistakes they made in their youth.⁸

“When you hear you are going to be a father, you make big changes... becoming a father makes you grow up rapidly. It has a pro-social effect.” – Dr Gareth Rouch, researcher

For those young fathers who have had difficult childhoods themselves, this often means they are motivated to ensure their own children have better experiences, and to dispense with those family patterns from their own childhoods they felt were harmful.⁹

“Many men find that being in a loving, caring relationship with their child repairs the damage caused by past abuse and neglect.” – Dr Gareth Rouch, researcher

Just like older fathers, teen fathers report experiencing a strong sense of connection with, and commitment to, their children.¹⁰

“I’ve found that teen fathers believed they could be capable fathers, were interested in fathering, and were upbeat about what they could contribute.” – researcher

“I have more energy... I can get up at night and I’m not tired... I’m closer to their age and understand what they’re going through.” – Ryan, teen father

Research also shows that participation in paid work can be an important source of identity and meaning for many young fathers.¹¹ Access to resources and support provided by paid work helps them to realise the hopes they have for their own and their children’s futures.

“When I first found out that I was going to be a dad I was shocked. It was pretty freaky... My dad left us when we were young, and I didn’t want to make the same mistake.” – Marcus, teen father

“I didn’t tell no one... Mum didn’t know about it until one day I brought the baby to her and she said ‘Whose baby is that?’... After some time she forgave me.” – Abdalla, refugee teen father

The cultural context of being a father in New Zealand

There are many perspectives on what it means to be a father in New Zealand. These perspectives are influenced by factors such as age at first birth, expectations within families of the roles of mothers and fathers, and cultural beliefs and practices. Being a father always takes place in a social and cultural context.

Fathers make important contributions to the lives of their children, family and whānau members, and hapū, iwi and communities. They do this through:

- their relationships with their children
- the contributions they make to households – for example, time, skills, money
- the support they can give to partners
- their networks – family, friends and wider community.¹²

Research shows the beneficial impact fathers have on their children’s wellbeing.¹³ The involvement of fathers can positively influence the development of children. It is linked to children’s self-esteem and resilience, to educational achievement and ability to develop friendships, and to reduced involvement in crime and substance abuse.¹⁴ The involvement of fathers is also linked to positive mental health outcomes for mothers.¹⁵

The role of fathers in New Zealand is now far broader than it has been historically.¹⁶ New Zealand research shows that fathers today are involved in a full range of activities with their children, including eating and playing together, helping with homework, reading stories and changing nappies.¹⁷ The identity of ‘provider’ remains important to many New Zealand fathers. Many fathers also describe themselves as being a friend and playmate to their children, a supportive partner, a coach, or a carer or nurturer.¹⁸

“It’s about being there for my kids. Being a good role model. Trying to give them the best start to life. Someone they can come to and feel safe.” – Ryan, teen father

“We take a holistic view of parenting – being a role model, being there physically and emotionally for your children, and being part of a team with your child’s mother, including helping out with household tasks like cooking and cleaning. The number one priority must always be the children, but being a team player is important too.”
– Tara Joe, Te Waipuna Puawai

Kaupapa Māori views of what it means to be a father are important to many New Zealand families and whānau. An important part of this is the concept of whakapapa (genealogy), which describes how people relate to the world and to each other.¹⁹ Also important is the concept of whanaungatanga, which refers to an individual’s relationships to members of their whānau, hapū and iwi, to other Māori, and to the world.²⁰ Another key concept is the ethic of collectivism and the notion that children belong to their parents, whānau, hapū and iwi.²¹

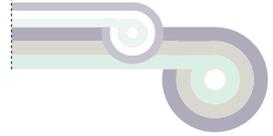
“Dads are connected to their children, their tamariki, and are supportive and loving. They tell their tamariki about their whakapapa, waka, maunga, marae. It’s about naming tamariki after those they know and respect... having Māori humour and kōrero – they can say ‘Chur... that’s neat alright’.” – Tau Huirama, service provider

“Mum, Dad and tamariki – its whanaungatanga, whakapapa, that’s really important – some of our kids really know the value of it.” – service provider

Pacific peoples’ understandings of being a father are increasingly significant in New Zealand. There are multiple Pacific perspectives, as the term refers to many nations with different cultures and languages, and Pacific identities are experienced differently by the growing New Zealand-born Pacific population.

“Pacific families as they exist in the Pacific Islands are extended ones rather than the more modern nuclear family unit. The word ‘father’ in the Pacific family may be given not just to the biological father but more generally to the person who is performing the father role.”
– David Lui, service provider

Nearly 30 per cent of all babies born in New Zealand in 2009 were to fathers who were not born in New Zealand themselves,²² and there are a range of other perspectives on being a father that are important to many New Zealanders. Ethnic affiliations, class or socio-economic background, and geographical location are some of the many factors that construct the different cultural meanings New Zealanders associate with fatherhood.



“Being an effective father is about being supportive with your kids, being positive – not so much critical, but guiding. Then there’s the obvious things like food and shelter and all that... and ensuring they grow up with good self-esteem.” – Brian, teen father

In developing initiatives to support teen fathers, it is important to remember parenting occurs in a variety of circumstances. Teen parenting does not always arise from, or result in, disadvantage. Many teen parents and their children do well, particularly when support is provided early. The most vulnerable, however, experience complex and multiple social, economic and health disadvantages. These can prevent them, and their children, from reaching their potential. This is where services for teen fathers can play an important role, providing teen fathers with support with parenting, helping them to strengthen their relationships, and assisting them to make progress in other areas of their lives such as school or work.

“Our slogan is ‘love for our children strengthens our future’. They’re in a situation that not every young person goes through. They’ve got a young life to look after but they’re still young themselves.” – Joseva Viqasi, Brothers in Arms

*“I didn’t realise until I went to jail that even their crying, I miss that. Having them around, it’s the best thing about being a father.”
– Marcus, teen father*

Things to think about

- What does being an effective father mean from the perspective of your service?
- What are some of the different cultural understandings in your community about what it means to be a father?
- How are teen fathers regarded in your community?

Resources

- Rouch G, 2005, Boys Raising Babies: Adolescent fatherhood in New Zealand, FAIR Centre of Barnardos New Zealand, Wellington.
- Luketina F, Davidson C and Palmer P, 2009, Supporting Kiwi Dads: Role and needs of New Zealand fathers, Families Commission, Wellington, available at www.nzfamilies.org.nz



Part 2: Developing services

Finding out about teen fathers in your community

This section outlines the importance of consultation with teen fathers and others in the local community when planning a service, and suggests different ways to do this.

Teen fathers across New Zealand differ in their needs and characteristics. Approaches to providing support that work in one community may not work in another. Talking to teen fathers and others in the community, including local iwi, helps to identify the specific needs of local teen fathers. It is also helpful to consult with existing community services so that any overlaps or gaps are known.

Research

Providing opportunities for young people to participate in service development helps to ensure services are appropriate for youth, and acknowledges the value of young people.²³ Full youth participation is more than consultation, and genuine participation is inclusive, realistic and considered a legitimate part of decision-making.²⁴ It involves creating opportunities for young people to solve problems and to contribute to an activity or idea, and it leads to greater 'ownership' of services.²⁵

Approaches used for consultation can include:

- interviews
- questionnaires
- discussion groups.²⁶

Teen fathers can be difficult to find and to engage in services. Consultation is effective in engaging them and in ensuring services are user-led.²⁷ Research shows that effective teen father services use feedback from teen fathers so they can better meet their individual needs, as well as better assess the needs of teen fathers in the local community.²⁸ Needs that teen fathers themselves identify are likely to be broader than just parenting support. A New Zealand study asked teenage fathers what types of support they would like. These were, in order of importance:

- support from employers/teachers
- someone to talk to, a mentor
- help with finding a job/career
- meeting other guys their age with kids
- newsletter/information, especially for young dads
- learning about the ins and outs of parenting.²⁹

Ongoing consultation with teen fathers also needs to be incorporated into ongoing service provision.³⁰ Consultation, and subsequently deciding what to deliver, also involves setting service goals and objectives as preparation for undertaking monitoring and evaluation in the future.

“There was heaps of stuff for my partner, but nothing for me.”
– Marcus, teen father

Practices of service providers

Service providers recognise the importance of ensuring services reflect the specific needs of their communities and the environments teen fathers live in.

“Teen fathers are influenced by fathering in general in New Zealand – the stories, beliefs and influences around them – so any interventions need to take those into account.” – service provider

“You need to tailor your service to the areas you’re working in. There’s not one thing that suits everyone.”
– service provider

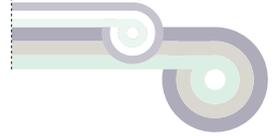
“If you can say, ‘I know what it’s like to grow up in that suburb’, it helps.” – Tara Joe, Te Waipuna Puawai

Service providers in New Zealand use a range of approaches to identify the needs of teen fathers in their communities, including consulting teen fathers directly and talking to other services.

“We thought about what sorts of teen fathers are out there, and we did surveys about what young dads want to know. We talked to other services to tap into what they thought was useful – services for dads, and also youth services. And we looked at Te Puni Kōkiri’s Whānau Leadership Development programme to find out what things Māori whānau are keen to know about.” – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

“We did our own research to find out about the needs of teen dads, and this gave us the directions for our service. Overwhelmingly the young dads said they wanted someone to talk to.” – Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

“We undertook needs assessment with young Māori men and gathered their views on what they felt was needed and relevant.” – Family Planning



“I think it’s very hard to be a father in New Zealand, especially for someone like me. If I was in my homeland, things would have perhaps been better than what I am going through now.”

– Abdalla, refugee teen father

Providers of services for teen mothers, such as Intensive Case Workers for Vulnerable Teen Parents and their Children, and Teen Parent Units, provide another way of alerting services to the support needs of teen fathers. Listening to the views of teen fathers’ partners, family and whānau is also important.

“When the mums did a positive parenting course, some said, ‘We want him to know this too’.” – Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

“It would have been nice to have someone to talk to before my baby was born. I only had my family and it was really hard to talk to them straight away.”

– Ryan, teen father

Things to think about

- What services are already available for teen fathers in your community?
- What approaches are you using to consult with teen fathers in your community?
- Who else in your community can you talk to about the needs of teen fathers?

Resources

- Family Services Directory, available at www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory provides an online listing of a range of family-related services across New Zealand, and can be searched by location and service type.
- Gray A, 2002, Increasing the Participation of Children, Young People and Young Adults in Decision Making: a report for the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Youth Affairs, Wellington, available at www.msd.govt.nz



Considering effective approaches to supporting teen fathers

This section discusses effective approaches to working with teen fathers. It includes the general principles that apply to all approaches, as well as examples of some specific approaches.

There are many different ways of approaching work with teen fathers, and no single approach will work for every community and for all teen fathers. The selection of approaches depends on factors such as the composition of the local community, the needs of teen fathers, cultural practices and beliefs, and the backgrounds of service staff.

Research

Research shows that one of the most critical principles for working effectively with teen fathers is to have a positive attitude towards them as young men and as fathers. A strengths-based or 'non-deficit' approach that ensures the service is positive about men and young fatherhood can help to achieve this.³¹

Effective services for teen fathers are delivered in ways that are appropriate to teen fathers, their culture and their age.³² Using interactive and engaging methods,³³ and giving feedback in a non-threatening and respectful manner, are important.³⁴ The way staff speak to teen fathers is also important, with research suggesting that successfully working with men involves using language that conveys belief in the father, and is strengths-based, honest, direct and relevant.³⁵

Focusing on the significance and value of fathers' relationships with their children is also important.³⁶ This includes acknowledging that, despite obstacles, most teen fathers want to be involved with, and do the best for, their children. It also includes ensuring children remain a central focus in any service for teen fathers.³⁷

Another key principle is to ensure the service is responsive to the needs and preferences of young men, such as through male-focused approaches. These recognise young men have different experiences and challenges growing up, and as a result, have different characteristics, activities, preferences and forms of expression.³⁸ Male-focused approaches accept that young men are different, and require specific service responses.³⁹

Focusing on the 'whole person' works better than focusing solely on solving problems. Even when programmes are intended to deal with a specific issue, they are likely to be more effective if they address broader needs as well.⁴⁰ The Whare Tapa Whā model is one way to apply this to teen father services. This model compares individual wellbeing to the four walls of a house, recognising wellbeing is part of a wider system encompassing four elements:

- taha wairua (the spiritual side)
- taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings)
- taha tinana (the physical side)
- taha whānau (family).⁴¹

Practices of service providers

Service providers emphasise the importance of taking a strengths-based view of teen fathers and their capabilities.

"We need to approach them in a positive and constructive way that builds possibilities. The programme needs to be driven by what drives them. We need to always feed them positive information." – Tau Huirama, service provider

"Our programme is part of a bigger cultural enquiry concerning fathering in our community. From a community perspective we need to say to teen fathers, 'We see you, we need you and we value you as a young father.' We want our programme to strategically influence a community narrative." – service provider

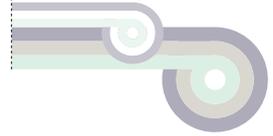
"We take an empowering approach – to listen and give them a space to talk where they can be themselves and not have to put on a show. We help them take responsibility for their roles as fathers and any issues that come with it, and to decide for themselves what the programme should cover." – service provider

"We always come to the initial conversation based on the assumption that young people are capable, competent and able to be good parents. Our approach is respectful. We put aside judgments. We go in believing that babies need dads as well, and we do whatever we can to help them parent together. We try to build confidence." – Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

"We aim not to create dependency on services but to guide families to support themselves." – Thrive Teen Parent Project, Auckland Women's Centre

The frameworks used by a service are reflected in its focus, content and style of delivery. For some, kaupapa Māori frameworks are important and influence what is delivered.

"He really encouraged me and really made me feel like I was doing a good job." – Ryan, teen father



“I was in the gang for most of my life. The teen dads service looked past my history and looked at helping me now. They showed me that I didn’t need a gang to help me raise my kids.” – Marcus, teen father

*“Kaupapa Māori opens the world up to a lot of Māori men. It reaffirms them and supports their thinking.”
– Tau Huirama, service provider*

Whare Tapa Whā also provides a model for service provision.

“We base our work around Whare Tapa Whā – taha hinengaro, taha wairua, taha tinana, taha whānau. We cover health, personal development, and child development from age 0–4. We also have a gym on site, and do lots of activities in the outdoors. We have fun together, and we have lots of food!” – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

Some services place the central focus on the parent-child relationship, using this as the basis for their work with teen fathers. Working together with teen fathers, their partners, and other family and whānau, and recognising they all have important roles in parenting children, is also important to many providers.

*“Our service comes from the parenting perspective – the relationship between the father and child. We stress the importance of relationships, contact with children, and the care of the child.”
– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust*

Service providers also have core principles or values on which they base their work. These include such things as whakapiki mana, aroha, manaakitanga and awhi.

*“A number of things provide a value base for our service. We emphasise whakarongo – the importance of listening to your partner and child. Communication is a big thing. We also emphasise tautoko and manaaki. We value honesty and integrity, and emphasise the value of employment as a means of building confidence. We ask them, ‘If you believe in these, what does it mean for your parenting?’”
– Bevan Holtz, The Pulse*

Things to think about

- What is the overall philosophy, kaupapa or framework of your service?
- What approaches does your service use in supporting teen fathers?
- How does your service present a positive attitude towards young men and teen fathers?

Resources

- Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002, Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa: Action for child and youth development, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Wellington, available at www.myd.govt.nz
- Barwick H, 2004, Young Males: Strengths-Based and Male-Focused Approaches: Review of the research and best evidence, Ministry of Youth Development, Wellington, available at www.myd.govt.nz
- King A, Working with Men: the non-deficit perspective, available at www.menshealthaustralia.net



Recognising the importance of identity, mana, whakapapa and whanaungatanga

This section provides an overview of some of the key Māori cultural concepts that are important to consider when providing services to teen fathers in New Zealand.

While it is important to recognise people acknowledge their Māori identity and culture in different ways, incorporating key cultural concepts of identity, mana, whakapapa (genealogy) and whanaungatanga (family cohesion) helps to ensure services are relevant, appropriate and effective for Māori.

Research

Research suggests services need to consider how best to get young Māori fathers and their whānau involved.⁴² This includes ensuring interventions are tailored to individual and whānau needs, which for many Māori means supporting their cultural identity.⁴³ Knowing and understanding one's own cultural identity and that of others is important, and is a factor in how one parents.

An integral aspect of Māori identity is mana. Mana can be defined as status, respect, presence,⁴⁴ prestige or power. Acknowledging and raising the mana of teen fathers is an important consideration when delivering services, both for Māori and non-Māori teen fathers.

Cultural practice and whakapapa are key elements in the development of Māori identity.⁴⁵ The concept of whakapapa can describe how people relate to the world and to each other.⁴⁶ Whakapapa provides the basis for establishing and enhancing relationships between individuals, whānau, hapū and iwi.

Whanaungatanga (family cohesion) is a fundamental component of identity. Whanaungatanga is more than simply an extended family network – it refers to the nature of an individual's relationships to other members of their whānau, hapū and iwi, to other Māori, and to the world.⁴⁷

Recognising that whānau experience diverse realities is an important part of service development,⁴⁸ as this shapes the development of people's world views.⁴⁹ Research suggests that whānau-focused approaches, which acknowledge these diverse realities, can help to promote access to services. Whānau-focused approaches have the potential to be inclusive of all Māori, those who have close links to hapū and iwi as well as those who do not have these links.⁵⁰

Practices of service providers

Service providers emphasise the importance of whanaungatanga and of teen fathers knowing who they are.

“As the whakatauākī (proverb) goes – ‘Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi; engari he toa takitini.’ – My journey is not one that I walk alone; it is one that involves many.”
– service provider

“You need to keep teen fathers in touch with their whakapapa. It provides a basis for connection that's unique and special.” – Tau Huirama, service provider

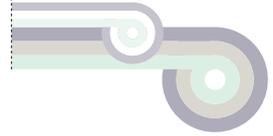
“Tuakiri (identity) is important – we need to talk about whanaungatanga, aroha, kotahitanga. Some kids don't know about this stuff... They need these values.”
– service provider

“Tama Ariki – the divine spark. From Ranginui and Papatūānuku came Tama-nui-te-rā and from Tama-nui-te-rā came Tama Ariki. Tama Ariki is the spark of light/sun in the morning, also known as the divine spark. As the day grows longer more sparks are made. The question is – how do we make our children spark?”
– Tau Huirama, service provider

Service providers also talk about the need for balance, and of recognising the diverse realities experienced by Māori.

“We have the ability to call on our traditions. However, it's also about keeping Māori up with the times – keeping with traditions but also hungry for the future.”
– Tau Huirama, service provider

“We need to remember that people have different taniwha... different needs. And that Māori have a multiplicity of backgrounds.” – service provider



“Whakapapa’s a big thing for Māori. It identifies you to your whole tribe... It’s good to know where your roots are.”
– Marcus, teen father

Delivering programmes on a marae provides opportunities for learning about whakapapa.

“The marae provides an environment that’s always respectful. It operates from maioha and manaaki. When difficult issues arise, the environment enables difficult questions to be answered especially in regards to whakapapa. The pou and the tūpuna within the marae – you marvel at the genealogy. You can see how people relate to each other.”

– Tau Huirama, service provider



Things to think about

- How does your service incorporate the concepts of identity, mana, whakapapa and whanaungatanga?
- How do you ensure your service is effective for Māori teen fathers?
- How does your service recognise and reflect the diverse realities experienced by Māori teen fathers?

Resources

- Durie M, 1998, Whaiora: Māori health development (2nd ed), Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002, E Tipu E Rea: a framework for taiohi Māori youth development, is a youth development activity kit, available at www.myd.govt.nz

Delivering services: providing parenting support to teen fathers

This section outlines approaches services can use to support teen fathers' involvement with their children.

Teen fathers have the capacity to be competent and confident parents, but they are not always prepared for becoming parents. Providing information, advice and support, including helping them with practical skills such as caring for children, meeting their basic needs, and managing their behaviour, are important parts of service delivery. Teen fathers may face barriers to being involved with their children, and sometimes they don't have as much involvement with their children as they would like. Services can help teen fathers manage difficult family relationships.

Research

Effective parenting support services for teen fathers can help to increase teen fathers' involvement with their children.⁵¹ Research suggests teen fathers benefit from child development and parenting classes, but the services provided to teen mothers are not always inclusive of fathers.⁵²

Research consistently points to the importance of involving teen fathers in their children's lives as early as possible. The antenatal period is a critical time for this – fathers who are involved then are more likely to stay involved.⁵³ The first year of the child's life is also a critical period for the same reason.⁵⁴

Teen fathers' family relationships, particularly their relationships with their children's mother and her parents,⁵⁵ affect their level of involvement with their children.⁵⁶ Some teen fathers live with their child's mother, or are still in a relationship with her. Some are separated from their child's mother and, while some of these are sole fathers, often their children live all or most of the time with their mother. Teen fathers who are not living with their children often feel powerless to address issues of access and custody.⁵⁷

An important aspect of helping teen fathers be more involved with their children is to address barriers that arise, particularly when these relationships are troubled. Services can help teen fathers to manage and negotiate difficult family situations by:

- working with fathers and mothers before the birth to address obstacles that hinder fathers' involvement with their children⁵⁸
- equipping teen fathers with the communication and negotiation skills they need to address complex family issues⁵⁹
- facilitating communication and co-operation between the teen father and the mother of his child⁶⁰
- providing services on an ongoing basis, so they can effectively respond to difficult family situations as they arise, rather than simply being one-off interventions.⁶¹

Encouraging all young fathers to live with their children and/or their children's mothers is not always in the best interests of the children.⁶² Services need to focus on the quality of father involvement, rather than simply on how much time fathers spend with their children.⁶³

Practices of service providers

Building relationships between the teen father and his children, and developing his skills in being a parent, are a central focus for some services.

"We emphasise the importance of time – both quality time, and quantity of time. And we emphasise it's about the relationships between the father and the child – a father and child who know each other as people, and who function in a loving relationship."

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

"We help them build their relationship with the child. We emphasise the importance of them being at the birth, but if they haven't been there, they can still build the connection to the baby."

– Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

Service providers use a range of approaches to address parenting skills and knowledge.

"We're doing some therapeutic work on attachment, using the programme 'Watch, Wait and Wonder'. We see that as a really good way of supporting dads' relationships with their little ones, and validating dads being with babies. It helps them realise that they don't always have to do things for the baby, but that they can let the baby take the lead."

– Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

"We help young dads with crisis management – like what to do when the baby keeps crying."

– Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

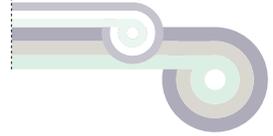
"For us, it's about good enough fathering, positive parenting. We don't try to make them perfect."

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

"We need to help young fathers to think, 'What is the bit I do as a father that no-one else can do? What is my relationship with this child that no-one else has?'"

– service provider

Service providers note the importance of working with partners, family and whānau, recognising that being a teen father takes place in a context of broader relationships. Some services play a mediating role between teen fathers, their children's mothers and their wider family and whānau.



“I’ve always liked kids and have been able to look after them. But it’s a really good experience learning how to put a nappy on for the first time.” – Ryan, teen father

“It’s sometimes useful to have contact with the mother, particularly if the relationship is up and down. If you know the young man’s partner, you can sometimes work as an intermediary.”

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

“We need to find kaumātua, some kaitautoko, an outside party... like restorative justice. A lot of families feel like their kōtiro has been sullied... We need to try to give those families a sense of accepting what happened, and how to progress from there... If you can get to that stage early, young dads can face up to and accept that responsibility.” – service provider

Teen fathers who are separated from the mothers of their children may face complex issues regarding access and custody. Service providers emphasise the importance of addressing these issues effectively.

“We really try to support young men who are separated from their partners to get good arrangements for access to their children where the importance of their role as a father is acknowledged.” – Jenny Hindin-Miller, service provider

“Their relationships with their partners are often tenuous, and they need to be able to parent independently as well as keep a reasonable relationship between them for the sake of the child.” – Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

“They showed us strategies for dealing with behavioural issues. They told us about having a positive environment around the kids.” – Marcus, teen father

○ Things to think about

- How do you ensure teen fathers have the skills they need to care for their children?
- How do you help them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to care for their children effectively?
- How does your service help teen fathers be involved with their children?
- How do you support teen fathers with difficult family relationships?
- What is your approach to dealing with access and custody?

● Resources

- The SKIP (Strategies with Kids – Information for Parents) website provides information on parenting for parents and service providers: www.skip.org.nz
- New Dads is a booklet by Family Planning providing tips and information for new fathers, available at www.familyplanning.org.nz
- Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009, Fathers Matter, available at www.eduweb.vic.gov.au



Delivering services: supporting teen fathers with other areas of their lives

This section provides an overview of how services can support teen fathers with their own developmental needs, and discusses the benefits of mentorship.

Becoming a father may add to the pressures young men already experience, and they may need support with multiple and complex issues relating to their own development as adolescents. Building and affirming teen fathers' identities as young men, and providing practical and emotional support, are important components of service delivery.

Research

Research shows many teen fathers need support beyond help with parenting skills or relationship management. The teenage years are a critical time for the development of identity and self-awareness.⁶⁴ Teen fathers are required to adopt a parental role at a time when they are exploring their own identity and independence.⁶⁵ Teen fathers may need additional support to help them adjust to these multiple roles and identities.⁶⁶

One approach to addressing the need for emotional and practical support is through a mentoring relationship. Mentoring relationships can be beneficial for young people in general, and teen fathers in particular may lack role models or people to turn to. Some effective programmes for teen fathers have made use of mentors – both professional case workers and trained volunteers – to provide support and role models to teen fathers.⁶⁷

Successful mentoring relationships involve developing lasting and supportive bonds with young people, with the initial focus being on developing a trusting and reliable relationship.⁶⁸

Some important features of mentoring relationships include:

- frequent contact
- supportive relationships that are not prescriptive or judgemental
- appropriate processes for selecting and matching mentors with clients, and for training and supporting mentors.⁶⁹

Mentoring does not necessarily require setting up a programme – those working with teen fathers often incorporate principles of mentorship into their practice.

“It’s important to steer them on a different path than what they know. Many young Māori fathers did what I did – joined a gang, went to jail. You need to teach them that family’s the way to go.”
– Marcus, teen father

Practices of service providers

Service providers recognise that, as well as becoming parents, teen fathers are young men in the process of becoming adults.

“We need to work with young dads so they can affirm and acknowledge themselves before they can do this for others.”
– Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse*

“We have young fathers who are involved with Corrections over things like unpaid fines and driving without a licence. They get into a downward spiral. We help them with budgeting and sorting out this stuff, and have conversations about how not to have these things hanging around their necks.” – Joanne Hope, *Waipuna Trust*

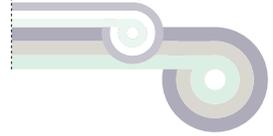
Some services consider it important to work with teen fathers not just as parents, but also as young men in the process of developing their identities. This may include making connections with local iwi or with teen fathers' hapū.

“We remember these are young men, as well as young fathers, and we try to help them create a balance between time for their partner and child, and time for themselves.”
– Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse*

“Our enquiry involves understanding more of our own lives to date, questions relating to identity and purpose, which include our intergenerational patterns, and how these may influence us as fathers and our relationships with our children and partners.” – service provider

“We talk about understanding their own fathers, who he was, why he was what he was.”
– Brendon, *Father and Child Trust*

“We can use these opportunities to teach young people about their Pacific cultures, values, traditions so they can get a better understanding of who they are. When you instil some knowledge they feel like they have taken something (gift, mealofa, taonga) with them as an outcome of the programme to add to their body of knowledge.”
– David Lui, service provider



“Some of the challenges are the lack of freedom. It’s hard to get any time for yourself, and you don’t always want the responsibility of looking after someone else all the time. When they’re screaming, when they need attention all the time, that can be tough.” – Brian, teen father

“Building on ‘ko wai au?’ – there is a lot of traditional kōrero that could be put in there.” – Tau Huirama, service provider

Service providers also emphasise the value of mentoring relationships, both in teaching young men about being fathers, and in connecting young men to broader support networks.

“Mentoring is about surrounding young men with support. It’s not about making them independent, but about building self-awareness, knowing who you are, who you can turn to for support, and what’s available in the community.”
– Tara Joe, Te Waipuna Puawai

“The programme is a process... a process of mentorship and affirmation – an experience of what it is to be affirmed and how to affirm.” – service provider

“The father is also responsible in the teaching and mentoring of young men into the father role. With the context here in New Zealand, which is very different from the Pacific, this is difficult to do. There is no village setting, the tasks here are different, so fathers are unfamiliar themselves, let alone trying to teach their sons how to do it.”
– David Lui, service provider

“If I was in my homeland, I would have married someone from my tribe and have a similar culture. My daughter would have been living with me. And this hurts me seeing her growing up without my advice to her as a father.”
– Abdalla, refugee teen father

Things to think about

- How do you support teen fathers to develop their identities as young men and as fathers?
- What kinds of emotional and practical support do you provide?
- How does your service mentor teen fathers, or incorporate principles of mentorship into its work with teen fathers?

Resources

- Farruggia S, Bullen P, Dunphy A, Solomon F and Collins E, 2010, The Effectiveness of Youth Mentoring Programmes in New Zealand, Ministry of Youth Development and the Health Research Council of New Zealand, available at www.youthmentoring.org.nz
- Breiding-Buss H, Guise T, Scanlan T and Voice T, 2003, ‘The support needs of teenage fathers’, available at www.teendads.org.nz



Deciding how to deliver services

This section covers group, individual and mixed approaches to delivering services for teen fathers. It provides examples of how service providers ensure their delivery addresses the needs of the teen fathers using their services.

Working with teen fathers can be approached in a number of ways, depending on the needs of the teen fathers who use the service, the kinds of support being provided, and the skills of the service's workers.

Research

Some of the different ways of working with teen fathers include:

- group work, such as meeting other teen fathers to work on parenting skills, share experiences, develop confidence, and explore fatherhood issues
- one-to-one work, which usually involves addressing individual needs
- peer support, ranging from casual approaches to formally-trained supporters
- fixed-term programmes, on specific aspects of fatherhood or personal development
- mixed approaches, which combine two or more of the above formats.⁷⁰

Different ways of working have different benefits.

Group-based approaches allow information to be delivered to many people at a time. Support group activities may also help to build teen fathers' connections to a programme.⁷¹

Group-based approaches can also help to develop peer support and break down the isolation of individual fathers. Research emphasises the importance of peers in the lives of young people and the beneficial effects positive peer influence can have.⁷² An advantage of peer support is that teen fathers may be more relaxed talking to peers than to professionals and this can ensure services are accessible and teen father friendly. Taking on a peer support role can also create opportunities for young people to develop confidence and new skills.⁷³

Teen fathers who lack confidence or feel too emotionally vulnerable to participate in a group may prefer one-to-one approaches.⁷⁴ Individual approaches allow services to respond more quickly and easily to complex individual needs, and encourage teen fathers to be more flexible in how they access and use the service. Establishing relationships through a one-to-one service before inviting young men onto a group programme is often useful.⁷⁵ These relationships provide a context in which individualised plans can be produced and teen fathers can become comfortable using the service.⁷⁶ One-to-one relationships can be established either through small groups, individual case management or mentoring.⁷⁷

Mixed approaches are generally more likely to be effective and to reach more fathers than those using only one delivery method.⁷⁸ Overall, being flexible and providing a wide range of programmes and services appears to be the most effective way to reach and retain a wide range of teen fathers.

Practices of service providers

Service providers use a range of individual, group and mixed approaches to working with teen fathers. Using a one-to-one approach is helpful in meeting the individual needs of young men.

"This recognises that each young dad is an individual. We focus on their needs, rather than trying to predict what they need because they are men. Once we've seen them for a few sessions, we sit down and make a plan with them. We ask, 'Where do you want to be three years down the track?' We try to work with them to instil a positive vision for the future – not just have them say, 'I want to get away from alcohol and drugs.' We revisit the plan every month or so."
– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

Other services run teen father groups. Usually these group-based programmes also incorporate elements of one-to-one work. Some services work with teen fathers on an individual basis before including them in a group, or as part of transitioning them out of a group.

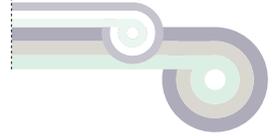
"Working one-on-one is important because it's private and confidential, but we've had groups where they've shared things – they have common ground."
– Joseva Viqasi, Brothers in Arms

"Ours is a group programme, and part of our pre-meeting assessment is to determine their 'capacity and eligibility' for inclusion in a group process. If they're not able to do this, our organisation has other programmes they can offer them." – service provider

Group programmes can help teen fathers develop supportive relationships with peers in similar situations.

"Relationships between young men can take time to develop, but once developed, they're strong... Hearing from a young dad himself often has more credibility, and it helps build that young man's capacity too." – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

"Some dads have taken their own initiative to support each other, eg car pooling, asking each other for support. They naturally hook up together when they find out where they're situated, like 'Shall we get together?' or 'Can I pick you up?'" – Junior, service provider



“Every week there was something new to talk about... child development... sex talks... relationships... being a parent – and we sat around and talked about stuff. It was a place for dads to hang out.” – Ryan, teen father

Recognising the potential risks of negative peer influence, and ensuring peer support is managed well, is also critical.

“It’s important to watch over the role of peers, as sometimes they can be giving the wrong information.” – service provider

Finding activities that suit teen fathers’ interests, and which they enjoy, is important, irrespective of the type of approach used.

*“Older ones found it a bit uncomfortable doing one-on-one mentoring – that’s why we formed a group – pulled them together and did events they might enjoy.”
– Joseva Viqasi, Brothers in Arms*

It is also important to be responsive to the cultures of the young men using the service. This includes recognising that the cultural beliefs and practices of teen fathers reflect a range of factors including ethnicity, youth and urban cultures, and family background.

“Culture is more than ethnically based. For some dads their culture is more than Samoan, for example. It’s youth, kiwi-born, Pacific person.” – David Lui, service provider

“Some of our boys are urban Māori and connect around the fact that they’re urban.” – Tara Joe, Te Waipuna Puawai

*“I would have gone to antenatal classes if it wasn’t in a group setting. I went to the GP and Plunket. I’m not interested in the group experience.”
– Brian, teen father*

○ Things to think about

- Which approaches are best suited to the needs of the teen fathers in your community, and to your service’s kaupapa or philosophy?
- How do your delivery methods reflect the preferences and characteristics of the teen fathers using your service? What implications do these approaches have for the way you deliver services?
- How does your service offer opportunities for teen fathers to support each other?

● Resources

- Sherriff N, 2007, Supporting Young Fathers: Examples of promising practice, Trust for the Study of Adolescence, Brighton, available at www.youngpeopleinfoocus.org.uk
- Bronte-Tinkew J, Burkhauser M and Metz A, 2008, Elements of Promising Practice in Teen Fatherhood Programs: Evidence-based and evidence-informed research findings on what works, US Department of Health and Human Services, available at dcfs.co.la.ca.us



Selecting people to work with teen fathers

This section considers the skills and qualities of those working with teen fathers. It also suggests some areas where ongoing training and support may be necessary.

The effectiveness of services and the outcomes achieved by teen fathers are influenced by the qualities, skills, knowledge and qualifications of the people who work with them. Building trust and rapport with young men, particularly those who feel hesitant about using a service and who need support to remain engaged, is an important component of service delivery. Training and ongoing support for workers helps to ensure their practice continues to develop.

Research

Research suggests workers' attitudes and attributes are critical to the willingness of teen fathers to participate in a service, and to its overall success. Key qualities of workers include that they are experienced,⁷⁹ empathetic,⁸⁰ enthusiastic⁸¹ and:

- well-connected in the community, and able to develop networks⁸²
- positive about teen fathers, and able to challenge negative ideas about them⁸³
- accessible to clients, and able to make regular contact with them⁸⁴
- able to recognise the boundaries of their own expertise, and to know when and how to refer clients to other services.⁸⁵

Making sure male workers are employed in services for teen fathers is important. Their presence provides opportunities for young men to experience and interact with positive male role models.⁸⁶ It also helps create a more welcoming environment for young men.⁸⁷

While it is important to have a male presence in the service, people working with teen fathers don't necessarily have to be male, or to be fathers themselves.⁸⁸ It is more important workers have the skills and attitudes needed to work well with teen fathers.⁸⁹ Services which work with a broader client group may find it useful to have a male young fathers worker who can help challenge perceptions the service is mainly for women, and who can provide alternative viewpoints to the mainstream.⁹⁰ The presence of workers from minority ethnic groups also helps get teen fathers from these groups involved.⁹¹

Providing staff training ensures they are equipped with the skills required for teen fathers work.⁹² Some of the key skills workers may need ongoing training in include working one-to-one,⁹³ group facilitation,⁹⁴ counselling,⁹⁵ outreach,⁹⁶ community networking⁹⁷ and referral.⁹⁸

Encouraging other service providers to consider teen fathers in the work they do, and being able to explain the value of working with teen fathers to those in other organisations, is also important.⁹⁹ This can be achieved by:

- assessing and developing workers' ability to support father-child relationships
- having an induction process that addresses workers' roles, knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding supporting fathers
- identifying and sharing good practice
- listening to workers' perspectives, and encouraging personal reflection.¹⁰⁰

Practices of service providers

Service providers emphasise the importance of being committed to working with young men, of understanding their needs, and of having skills to develop trusting relationships with them.

*"We need people who can engage with young people, bring people together and have their heart in the programme."
– Tau Huirama, service provider*

Empathy, encouragement, respect and humility, the ability to work from a strengths-based perspective, and effective communication and problem-solving skills are important attributes for staff working with teen fathers. Providers note the importance of being safe to work with vulnerable young people, and of being able to work in an ethical way.

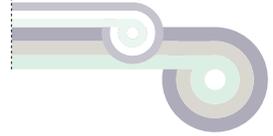
"They need skills and knowledge around boundaries. It can be easy to create dependency as these are young men and your relationships with them are different to the ones you have with adults." – Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

Larger services note the advantages of having a multi-disciplinary team, including workers with professional qualifications in health, social work and child development.

"When families are very vulnerable you need a high skill set – social work or counselling qualifications are necessary. But there are many other things that can be done by people who don't have these qualifications but who do have rapport." – Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

Some programmes are delivered solely by men. For others, ensuring male workers are highly visible in the service and available to work with young men, particularly with those who have not had good male role models, is important.

"As a facilitator, I need to be a model of what effective fathering is about. I want to be seen as effective in my relationships with my partner and children. I need to walk the talk." – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse



“They need to be understanding, non-judgmental. They also need some kind of authority – as in qualified to know what they’re talking about. They’d need to be able to give out actual advice – they couldn’t just be a buddy.” – Brian, teen father

Most services acknowledge the importance of finding an appropriate match of workers and teen fathers, and recognise this is not always achieved with a male worker.

“The person working with them can be a woman, as some young men find it easier to talk to a woman, and women can be better at getting young men to talk about what really moves them.”

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

Providers also recognise the advantages of having workers with the ability to address teen fathers’ cultural needs.

“If it’s a kaupapa Māori service, it’s fantastic to have someone who can converse in the traditional ways. Some teen dads speak Māori, and want this to be practised. It’s implementing tuakana teina.” – service provider

Service providers note the challenges of working with very vulnerable young men, and the importance of collegial and other forms of support. Supervision for those working with teen fathers is also critical.

“We have a small team, but they have passion and expertise. We give each other support, especially when it seems like you’re not making progress with a young father. At these times, it’s especially important that others can remind you of your success.”

– Harald Breiding Buss, Father and Child Trust

“I need to have the ability to look at myself, to see where I need support and to find people who can help me.”

– Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

“He’s a good guy. He helps out in any way he can. Even when things turn to crap he always has a smile on his face.”

– Marcus, teen father

○ Things to think about

- What skills, knowledge, qualities, and qualifications are important for workers in your services?
- What would you like teen fathers to say about the people who work in your service? What implications does this have for the people you select as workers?
- What policies and procedures do you have in place to ensure workers are safe to practise with teen fathers?
- What are the training, development and support needs of your workers? How do you provide this support?
- What skills and training do your workers need to work effectively with other services?

● Resources

- Fatherhood Institute, Guide to Developing a Father-Inclusive Workforce, available at www.dcsf.gov.uk
- Sherriff N, 2007, ‘Young fathers workers’ in Supporting Young Fathers: Examples of promising practice, Trust for the Study of Adolescence, Brighton, 39–44, available at www.youngpeopleinfocus.org.uk



Getting teen fathers involved and keeping them engaged

This section suggests ways of reaching and engaging teen fathers in services. It includes promoting services effectively, and building and maintaining relationships with teen fathers once they have entered a service.

Teen fathers are often considered hard to reach, but there are a number of strategies that can be used to encourage their participation in services. These encompass the ways services promote themselves, build networks in the community, and make themselves appealing to teen fathers.

Research

Research identifies a number of effective ways to get teen fathers involved in services. Some of these relate to the way services for teen fathers are promoted, such as providing information to teen fathers on the benefits of attending the service.¹⁰¹ Promoting services by word-of-mouth¹⁰² and in ways which appeal to young men and are positive about young fathers, is also effective.¹⁰³

Research suggests men are more likely to respond well to recommendations from people they trust, such as friends, 'mates', family members and respected professionals, than to fliers and newspaper advertisements.¹⁰⁴ It is also important to recognise the significance of peer groups for young people.¹⁰⁵ This means services need to be well-known and well-regarded in the community. Building networks with community organisations such as schools, antenatal and Well Child/Tamariki Ora providers, and programmes for teen mothers can help find and engage fathers.¹⁰⁶

Combining services for fathers with the provision of practical services, such as support with housing and benefits, can also be effective.¹⁰⁷ Working with teen fathers on one area they need support with can help involve them in a wider range of support services. Participating in parenting support services can help teen fathers to learn about and access other services, including employment, education, life skills, financial and legal advice, housing or counselling services. On the other hand, some teen fathers initially reluctant to engage with parenting services may gradually become more interested in learning about parenting once they have received help to address other issues in their lives.¹⁰⁸

Additional issues to consider when getting young fathers from minority ethnic groups involved, particularly new migrants, include:

- immigration status and eligibility for services
- language barriers
- the effects of becoming a father in a new and unfamiliar environment
- lack of connections with their local community and services
- managing two or more different cultural contexts/beliefs
- bullying and fear of racism.¹⁰⁹

Practices of service providers

Teen fathers often know other teen fathers in their community, and service providers note the importance of these connections as a way of raising awareness of their service.

“Word-of-mouth is the most common way young dads find out about this programme. We also tap into programmes already working with teen parents, including the teen parent units. Once word got around about what we’re doing, we got lots of referrals from other community agencies.”
– Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse*

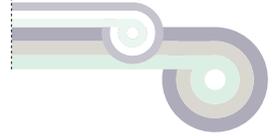
“We have a ‘bring a friend’ day. This is an opportunity for them to bring along another teen dad who might be interested in the programme.”
– Tara Joe, *Te Waipuna Puawai*

Having strong connections to the community and to places where young people go can be a good way to find teen fathers. Other services, including those for teen mothers, are a useful source of referrals.

“We found young fathers by working with agencies already linked to ours. We also did some marketing with our van which has the name of the service on it. We attended community days, and gave out brochures at events like Children’s Day and the A&P show.” – service provider

“Young fathers are referred to this service by school counsellors, hospital social workers, youth justice providers and other community-based services. Some are referred by their parents. We also have a radio station that has offered us time for a teen father ad. We also have a website and get some enquiries by email. There’s also a Facebook page for young dads.”
– Harald Breiding-Buss, *Father and Child Trust*

“We reach young fathers via our community services – through schools, alternative education providers, remand homes, armed forces.” – *Family Planning*



“When I went to the antenatal programmes there were two other young couples there... I got one of them to come along to the dads programme with me.” – Ryan, teen father

Once teen fathers are involved in the service, it is important to identify what their needs are.

“We get a lot of information from referrers when the young dad comes to us, but it’s not always what we find they need when we start working with them. We have a needs assessment sheet, but this is covered in a very informal way. It’s whatever we get from what they disclose.”

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

“The pre-meeting is a half to one hour chat covering what we offer and what to expect, and the underlying issues facing them at the moment, like housing and relationships... so that the facilitator knows who these people are. It’s also good for the dads.” – Junior, service provider

Persistence is often required to keep teen fathers engaged with the service. Some providers find that having an open door policy, working on a drop-in basis, and ensuring workers are easy to contact by text and email, is effective.

“It’s a lot of work to keep the relationship going. We often have to do a lot of door-knocking to build up the relationship, and you might have to see them four or five times before they’ll come to a programme.”

– service provider

Being prepared to work with teen fathers long term is important, as is ensuring their transition from the service is as smooth as possible.

“Transition from our services usually happens automatically. Even with cases where we’ve had daily contact over many months, over time things eventually settle down. Usually this happens when a young father has an established routine, a house, a job, where he can see his kids, and has some good friends.”

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

“I’m not sure how easy it would be to seek out help like that. They’d have to be friendly and approachable.” – Brian, teen father

Things to think about

- What approaches do you use to promote your service to teen fathers?
- How can services for teen mothers help identify teen fathers in need of support?
- Who else in your community may be aware of teen fathers needing support (eg midwives, GPs, antenatal services, early childhood education services, Well Child providers)?
- How do you ensure your service has a good reputation among teen fathers and that teen fathers are likely to refer others to it?
- What strategies do you use to build supportive and trusting relationships with teen fathers?

Resources

- Sawtell M, Wiggins M, Austerberry H, Rosato M and Oliver S, 2005, Reaching Out to Pregnant Teenagers and Teenage Parents: Innovative practice from Sure Start Plus pilot programmes, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, available at www.education.gov.uk



Creating environments that are teen father friendly

This section suggests key elements of a service environment that help to make it appealing to teen fathers.

A venue that looks and feels welcoming to teen fathers encourages them to get involved in services, and keeps them engaged. Whatever the type of service being provided, it is important teen fathers can reach the venue easily and feel comfortable being there.

Research

When delivering services to young people, selecting a venue that is acceptable and convenient for young people is a key principle. This includes ensuring young people's lifestyles, values and beliefs are recognised, and the environment is physically, culturally and emotionally safe.¹¹⁰

Services for teen fathers need to be provided in a location that is easy to find and travel to, and that has suitable facilities.¹¹¹ Providing services in places teen fathers can visit with their children, such as community centres, is one way to achieve this.¹¹² It is also important to provide services at hours that are convenient for teen fathers,¹¹³ recognising some teen fathers will not be able to attend during standard working hours. The location of the service may include spaces shared with other service users (such as other youth services), may be a separate space or may be one used at different times to services for teen mothers.¹¹⁴

The cues provided by the immediate environment can have a significant influence on how comfortable teen fathers feel about using the service. It is important the environment reflects their age group and cultures.¹¹⁵ The environment should also recognise the different ethnicities of the young people using the service. Some things that can make the environment friendlier for teen fathers are:

- positive images of young men and young fathers
- reading material and photographs of men
- the presence of male staff.¹¹⁶

Practices of service providers

Service providers emphasise the need for services to be provided in an environment that is suitable for young men and that supports their identity as fathers.

“The venue has to be user-friendly – providing a home environment reminds the teen dads of home. We need to make sure dads from the outskirts can get there, that it is central to public transport, and comfortable for families to come in.” – Junior, service provider

“We have sofas and we're close to a kitchen so they can make a milo or coffee. We try to get away from it looking like a classroom environment. We have some standard ground rules such as, no smoking, drugs, alcohol or patches/colours. We then ask the dads attending what they think should be added to the list.” – service provider

Making sure teen fathers feel comfortable coming to the venue is another consideration.

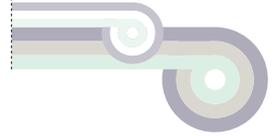
“There are a lot of services on site here, and there's no stigma associated with accessing them. When young people come here, no-one knows whether it's for free internet, or whether they're seeing a counsellor.” – service provider

“For the first visit we meet in the home of the teen or in an environment they choose. People are sometimes worried about coming in to the clinic, so I always call, introduce myself, arrange to meet them at home, and after the initial meeting I invite them to come to the clinic.” – Gemma McGarry, Young Mums Midwife, Counties Manukau DHB

A relaxed and comfortable environment is important. Service providers find that providing a meal can draw teen fathers to the service and help to create the right kind of atmosphere.

“We put pizza on, try to make it upbeat... Having food is a great way to relax and meet up in the evening.” – Brendon, Father and Child Trust

Some services include work with teen fathers in an outdoors environment. This provides opportunities to develop a range of skills, and to learn about Tanemahuta and Papatūānuku.



“We had dinner there on programme nights. Free feeds and activities... The van picking us up was helpful cos I didn’t know how I’d get there. I wasn’t motivated to do much at the start, and I wouldn’t have made the effort.” – Ryan, teen father

*“We use the outdoor environment for things we can’t do in a classroom. As Māori we need to be in touch with the elements and the interconnections – maunga, ngāherehere, wai... including waka ama. I have friends who work in these areas and say ‘Bring your young men out and we’ll help them.’ We learn how to live off the land... to cook and to sleep under the stars.” – Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse**

Some services provide transport for teen fathers to get to the service. As well as ensuring teen fathers are able to get access to the service easily, providing transport is an additional opportunity to talk to the fathers in a relaxed environment, allowing pressing issues to be discussed.

*“The mentors pick up the dads for the group activities. They start straight away with catch ups on how they are and conversations around the theme for that day’s activities. Cars are great places to talk cos the young dads don’t have to look anyone in the eye!” – Tara Joe, *Te Waipuna Puawai**

“Unity – it felt like we were all as one and we all had similar problems. You get other young dads’ strategies and their ways of dealing with things. Learning from each other and their life experiences”

– Marcus, teen father

○ Things to think about

- How do you ensure you provide an environment that’s suitable for, and appealing to, teen fathers?
- What are some of the practical considerations involved in ensuring teen fathers are comfortable attending your service?
- How do you ensure teen fathers can get access to your service easily?

● Resources

- King A, *Working with Men: the non-deficit perspective*, available at www.menshealthaustralia.net



Working with families and whānau

This section discusses the importance of families and whānau in teen fathers' lives, and suggests ways of working that recognise the centrality of family and whānau.

Teen fathers are part of a network of relationships that include their children's mothers, and their wider family, whānau and communities. A teen father's family and whānau, as well as those of his children's mother, play a significant role in his life and in his relationship with his children. His family and whānau are often among his most important sources of support. Where possible, involving a teen father's family and whānau helps to strengthen the relationships between them.

Research

Family and whānau form one of the most important social environments for young people, and strong connections to family can make a big difference to their wellbeing.¹¹⁷ Research also shows services promoting young fathers' involvement with their children are more successful when they involve mothers and when they take into account the roles of extended family members in teen fathers' relationships with their children.¹¹⁸ When a teen father is still in a relationship with the mother of his children, he is a crucial source of support for the mother, and his involvement is linked to better mental health and parenting outcomes for her.¹¹⁹

Specialist services may be required to meet the needs of some teen fathers, particularly those who are not in a relationship with their child's mother and who have little contact with their child. It is also important, however, to integrate support for teen fathers into mainstream services for teen parents.¹²⁰ This can help to ensure the role of teen fathers is not considered in isolation. Specifically, antenatal and sexual health services are areas where teen fathers could be more actively included.

Participating in antenatal services and being at the birth is an important part of building teen fathers' relationships with their children, and predicts later involvement in their children's lives.¹²¹ Research shows, however, that teen fathers often report feeling excluded from antenatal and postnatal services, and feel judged by staff.¹²²

Antenatal services can help to include the teen father by addressing him directly as well as the child's mother, ensuring he knows what to expect of the labour if he is going to be present, and discussing with him how he can provide support to his partner.¹²³

Sexual health services are another area where including teen fathers is critical. Some key principles for providing sexual health services to teen fathers are:

- confidentiality – this is important for all young people accessing sexual health services
- staff attitudes – staff need to have the confidence and skills to work positively with teen fathers
- atmosphere – needs to be welcoming to teen fathers
- location and opening hours – need to be accessible and targeted to teen fathers.¹²⁴

Practices of service providers

Service providers recognise teen fathers are part of a broader family context and often try to involve the wider family and whānau in their services. This includes involving the teen parents' own parents, and grandparents.

“He’s everybody’s – the baby – the moko belongs to all of us. He is everybody’s responsibility. It’s good to have teen dads, dads, koro, kui, mums and partners, involved somewhere, so being a dad isn’t done in isolation.”
– Tau Huirama, service provider

“Grandparents have an effective way of conveying their experience and wisdom that does not come across as dictatorial but as a pool of knowledge that can be tapped into.” – David Lui, service provider

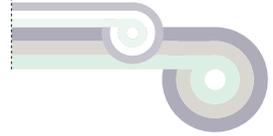
Some service providers find the best way to reach teen fathers is through their children's mothers.

“Traditionally our services have been focused on teen mothers, and young fathers have been encountered when social workers visit. But now we’re more proactive and ask teen fathers if they’re interested in participating.”
– Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust

Some services ensure mothers, and other family and whānau, are included from the very beginning.

“On the induction night we involve the teen fathers and their significant others. One of the young fathers brought along his partner and her mother who was interested in what this was going to do for her daughter. It’s important for us to hear their concerns about what this programme is going to do.” – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

“The initial assessment by the social worker should include the young father’s family and whānau, unless there is a specific reason why this should not be so.” – service provider



“My family would have supported me fully. They would have come around a lot with good advice to me and my baby’s mother... But now mum can’t do that here... even if she wants to help me she’s got a lot to worry about herself.” – Abdalla, refugee teen father

“It helps to talk to the parents of the mother of the baby. When they support the young father’s involvement, they can be your strongest ally.”
– Harald Breiding-Buss, *Father and Child Trust*

Services can also play a role in building teen fathers’ relationship and communication skills.

“We remind them that their partners have a voice too. Young fathers can do the work, but then find they’re not on the same wave-length as their partners. So we tell them to take home what they’ve learned and discuss it with their partners. We call it ‘home play’, not ‘home work’.”
– Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse*

Involving teen fathers in antenatal services is also seen as important.

“Part of doing the first antenatal home visit with the young mums is to make sure their partners are there – having them involved in the first initial appointment, so they know who I am and what the service is. If I’m lucky enough to be involved with a young mother who’s got a social worker, one of her first jobs is to get families and whānau involved as much as possible.” – Gemma McGarry, *Young Mums Midwife, Counties Manukau DHB*

“We don’t want to duplicate services so we work alongside antenatal classes rather than running them ourselves.”
– Junior, *service provider*

“We had a wāhine and pepi trip – a barbecue at the beach. The kids got to play together. My partner’s wondering when we can do it again.”
– Ryan, *teen father*

Things to think about

- How do you ensure that teen fathers’ partners, family and whānau are involved in your service?
- How can services for teen mothers be more inclusive of teen fathers?

Resources

- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009, *Getting Maternity Services Right for Pregnant Teenagers and Young Fathers*, revised edition, available at publications.education.gov.uk
- Department of Health (Teen Pregnancy Unit), 2000, *Guidance for Developing Contraception and Sexual Health Advice Services to Reach Boys and Young Men*, available at www.six.somerset.gov.uk



Working with other services

This section provides an overview of the benefits of making connections to other services, and outlines some approaches that can be used to develop these links.

Teen fathers receive help and support from a wide range of health, education and social services in the community. Making connections between teen father services and other services is an effective way to ensure teen fathers' needs are met, as well as being a means for providers to share their knowledge and experience in supporting teen fathers.

Research

Research shows effective services for teen fathers offer a comprehensive array of services beyond the provision of parenting information, such as education and employment services, and case management.¹²⁵ Research also shows that different areas of support are connected. Providing support in one area can have benefits in other areas. For example, assisting young fathers to find employment may help with resolving problems with access to their children,¹²⁶ and their payment of child support.¹²⁷

Building strong networks between services and professionals is important for working with teen fathers. These networks can help fathers receive and get access to the services they need, and they can help raise wider awareness of teen father services. Networks are useful for allowing service providers to share expertise and information.¹²⁸

Some approaches to raising awareness of a service and developing contacts and networks include:

- visiting other services
- delivering presentations
- holding case conferences
- distributing information about the service
- working strategically with other agencies in the long term, such as attending key meetings and offering training to other agencies.¹²⁹

One way to see whether a service or system is inclusive of teen fathers is to conduct a whole system review. This involves a service reflecting on how teen fathers are treated from entry to exit. It involves looking at administrative procedures, measures of success, core principles and how fathers are brought into the service.¹³⁰

It can be challenging working with organisations that have different approaches and attitudes towards teen fatherhood, but working with other services to help them be more responsive to teen fathers' needs is an important part of service delivery. This may mean visiting other services and programmes and talking about how they can encourage teen fathers to use them. It may also involve teen father services providing training to wider groups as a way of sharing their knowledge of working with teen fathers.¹³¹

Practices of service providers

Service providers emphasise the importance of recognising what their service can and cannot do, and of making referrals elsewhere where teen fathers have needs their service is unable to meet.

"We're aware of our limitations, and know that young dads need other services that we can't provide. We network them into other services like early childhood education, Work and Income, Well Child, and the teen parent unit. We tap into local networks for counselling, health, and drug and alcohol. We get other services to come and meet with our guys so that we can get on with the things we do best."
– Bevan Holtz, *The Pulse*

"We constantly focus on the child. If their concerns are not about their relationship with the child, we refer them to other youth-focused services as these issues are more about them being young, rather than them being a dad."
– Harald Breiding-Buss, *Father and Child Trust*

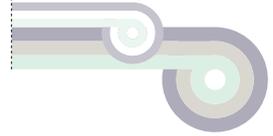
"We have a resource night where we invite in people from the community, such as Work and Income, health services, parenting programmes and employers." – service provider

"We collate services in a directory which we give out to our young dads." – Junior, service provider

Employment is an issue for many teen fathers, and some services look at ways to help teen fathers find a job.

"Unemployment can seriously affect a Pacific father's self-esteem as he struggles to perform his role."
– David Lui, service provider

"I notice that a lot of the partners of our young mums are unemployed. They've left school early and have low skills. We refer them for career advice."
– Joanne Hope, *Waipuna Trust*



*“He helped pre-enrol the kids in the school and kōhanga...
He helped with lawyers and stuff. They keep everything on the straight
and narrow. They’ve kept me out of jail.”*
– Marcus, teen father

Services recognise the importance of providing on-site services for young Māori men. When these are not available, they consider referring teen fathers to Māori providers or bringing in expertise from Māori services.

“All services need to be effective for Māori and for Pacific young people, and you really need to work on that. We brought in Māori services to work with our young men and women.” – Jenny Hindin-Miller, service provider

*“We talk to them about family connections and ask whether they want help accessing iwi services. We’re always looking for alternative services to meet young Māori men’s needs.”
– Joanne Hope, Waipuna Trust*

“I’ve worked pretty closely with a man from a Māori service. He’s brought a lot of whānau ora and cultural practices into our work.” – Brendon, Father and Child Trust



Things to think about

- How do you work with other services to ensure your service is effective for Māori?
- What other services in your community do you work with to ensure teen fathers’ needs are met?
- What other services do you work with to help transition teen fathers out of your service?
- How do you work with other services to help them be more accessible and acceptable to teen fathers?

Resources

- Family Services Directory, available at www.familyservices.govt.nz/directory provides an online listing of a range of family related services across New Zealand, and can be searched by location and service type.
- SKIP is a government funded initiative that supports parents and whānau to guide their children’s behaviour in a positive way: www.skip.org.nz
- Child, Youth and Family, Everyday Families, available at www.cyf.govt.nz provides tips on raising happy and healthy children.
- Family Start provides home-based support for families/whānau from before the baby is born until their child begins school: www.familyservices.govt.nz
- The Campaign for Action on Family Violence’s ‘Are You Ok?’ website contains information and resources about family violence: www.areyouok.org.nz

Monitoring, evaluating, and reflecting on practice

This section suggests some approaches to assessing the extent to which services are meeting outcomes. It includes possible questions and outcomes that could be considered.

Finding out how well a service is working, what outcomes it is delivering and what aspects of the service can be improved, are important components of delivery. These processes enable services to assess the extent to which the goals and objectives of the service are being achieved and how services might be delivered differently in the future.

Research

Monitoring refers to checking progress against aims and objectives by collecting and reporting appropriate information. This includes basic information about teen fathers participating in the service, such as their age, ethnicity, partner status, current situation, housing status, employment, and involvement with other agencies. It also includes identifying the outcomes they achieve. Ensuring there are effective systems in place for the collection, storage and use of this information is an important component of monitoring and evaluation.¹³²

Evaluation involves finding out whether the aims and objectives of the service are being met. This process helps build on experience and ensure the needs of teen fathers are better met in the future.¹³³ Analysing data helps improve practice and service provision.¹³⁴ Evaluation also enables services to assess the extent to which innovative practices have been effective.

A range of approaches can be used to assess how well a service is working, including consultation with teen fathers, team meetings, critical reflection on practice, supervision, peer evaluation and independent evaluation.¹³⁵

Evaluation enables the consideration of questions such as:

- what are the service's strengths and weaknesses?
- what implementation problems were encountered and how were these addressed?
- what things have and have not worked?
- how can those aspects that have not worked be improved?
- how have the differing needs of teen fathers been met?
- what aspects of good practice have been identified, and are these transferable?

Some outcomes that can be considered are:

- effectiveness of the service in getting teen fathers involved
- relationships that have been developed with other services, and the effectiveness of these
- strengths and weaknesses of referral processes
- impacts of the service on teen fathers – including changes in fathers' confidence, self-esteem, parenting skills, relationships.¹³⁶

Practices of service providers

Providers recognise monitoring and evaluation is important for their own service development, as well as for being a means of fulfilling contractual obligations and reporting to their governing bodies.

"We regularly conduct internal and external evaluations and gain feedback from the young parent families we work with. We also review our work with our partners and the community."

– Thrive Teen Parent Project, Auckland Women's Centre

A variety of outcomes for teen fathers are measured. Some services note the importance of ongoing measurements, reflecting that any success in outcomes often takes time to manifest.

"Signs of success are in educational achievement, the pleasure of establishing a relationship built on trust, and watching young dads become good parents."

– Jenny Hindin-Miller, service provider

"For some young dads, simply getting to the point where they're willing to call someone for support, and where they can dream about their future, is success."

– Tara Joe, Te Waipuna Puawai

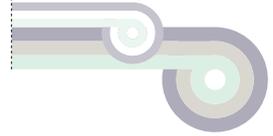
"We receive feedback through comments – often comments made after a number of years. They let you know what a life-changing experience it was for them – 'I don't know what I'd have done without this.' For young guys who are no longer involved with the Police, or with using marijuana, that's success too."

– Harald Breiding-Buss, Father and Child Trust

Some services focus their evaluations on what young fathers themselves say about the service, while others also include feedback from family and whānau.

"Whare Tapa Whā can be used as a means of monitoring and evaluating our delivery. For example, are they able to talk about their whānau and whakapapa?"

– Tau Huirama, service provider



“My partner says I’m more confident and happy. I’ve got somewhere to go for a break from everything. It’s better for both of us. I can make new friends.” – Ryan, teen father

*“We can seek feedback by widening the enquiry base – asking aunts, kaumātua, about how to do things and about how young men are benefiting from the service.”
– service provider*

“We do a post-programme survey with them, and include their partners.” – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

Providers have a variety of ways of collecting and receiving information about the effectiveness of their service.

“Once a month we give them a short survey on what they’ve learnt.” – Joseva Viqasi, Brothers in Arms

“I get some lovely bits of feedback from some of the guys via text, like ‘I’m good now.’ They say it feels better now they have told somebody. Sometimes it’s about getting them calmed down.” – Brendon, Father and Child Trust

Ensuring workers have opportunities for individual and group reflection helps their own development and the development of the service.

*“Each member of the team has monthly external supervision to promote reflection on practice.”
– Thrive Teen Parent Project, Auckland Women’s Centre*

“We’re always learning – every group we do we try to make it better so young dads can enjoy it. We’re always trying to make an effort – thinking how to make it more useful, to keep them coming.” – Junior, service provider

“We’ve realised that if you really put yourself into this work, it requires a huge commitment. Our relationship with some of these young men, and with their partners and children, is now part of our lives. If something significant happens for him, like the blessing of his child, or when his child starts school, or when he gets married, we’ll be there. We all put in the hard yards and then there’s fulfilment and joy... and that’s what this work is about. The rewards are substantial and long-term.” – Bevan Holtz, The Pulse

Things to think about

- What outcomes do you measure, and how do you measure these?
- How do teen fathers provide feedback on service delivery?
- What systems do you have in place for the safe collection and storage of data?
- What processes do your workers engage in to support reflective practice?
- What changes do you make to your service based on the results of monitoring and evaluation?
- What methods do you use to report to teen fathers, their families and whānau, and to the community?

Resources

- How-to Guides: Community Resource Kit – Monitoring and Evaluation, available at www.community.net.nz



Part 3: Profiles of services

This section provides profiles of five providers currently delivering services to teen fathers in New Zealand.

Father & Child Trust – Auckland and Christchurch

www.fatherandchild.org.nz

www.teendads.org.nz

Father & Child works with teen dads in both Auckland and Christchurch.

In everything we do, our focus is on the relationship between a father and his child. Our philosophy is that fathers and mothers share a joint and equal responsibility for their children regardless of age, relationship status and other environmental factors.

Our approach to fathers of all ages involves a needs assessment (in terms of parenting, father-child relationship, and barriers), a definition of desired outcomes, and hands-on help to support the father to get there. The majority of our referrals are community-based, ie they are fathers not already 'in the system' and they come to us through word of mouth, the website or some other information. For teen dads, common referrers include probation and teen mum service providers.

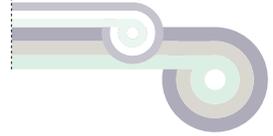
Our approach with teen fathers (those aged 18 years and under) differs in some key aspects from our work with older fathers:

- Our work is more relationship focused than outcome focused. At the start, our support worker will establish a trusted relationship with the young man that is expected to last for many months, and can be up to three years. Through this relationship, the young father is frequently acknowledged and reaffirmed as a vital part of his child's life, which is the anchor for all other work.
- We get actively involved in problem solving and advocacy for the young man, especially where his relationship with his child needs to be negotiated with the mother of the child or her family, or where things 'blow up'. We will also actively help with education or job options and advocate for the young man with educational providers or employers.

We are working hard to build close relationships with providers of services to teen mums. We believe separate service provision for mums and dads is not a model for a co-operative parenting approach, encourages stereotyping and takes choices away from parents. This is detrimental to the child's wellbeing. We are striving to build services that deliver to teen mums and dads jointly.



“New Zealand communities where fathers and mothers are supported equally and have access to the resources and help they need to work together for the welfare of their children.”



Teen Fathers Plus – Waitakere

Teen Fathers Plus is a community-funded, collaborative project initiated and co-ordinated by HealthWEST, Changeworks Trust and Barnardos. It works alongside the young fathers of Waitakere. The project was developed and piloted in 2009 and made available to the community from March 2010.

The programme is a community response to a recognised community need, and acknowledges the unique significance of fathering. We looked at what worked and what did not work in the context of previous generations and identified what may meet today's needs.

The programme consists of 10 weekly group sessions, focusing specifically on fathering capacity as opposed to parenting skills. It aims to open up the latent parenting and relational potential of fathers. The programme is a structured combination of male culture building, activity, art and ritual, and aims to develop relational intimacy, awareness, engagement, availability, responsibility and belonging. It is of us, for us and from us.

We acknowledge that being a youthful father and parent is not about deficit. It is much more about family and community relationships; the wisdom, mentoring, resource and support we choose to apply to an emerging generation. It is about the hope and need we hold for young fathers, and their importance to a sustainable community. Our intention is to validate all fathers to build positive relationships with themselves, their children, their partners, whānau and community.

We recognise that the effective delivery of programme content is reliant on the quality of men who are in a mentoring role alongside the participants. Our facilitators are extraordinary men, respected community role models, and skilled and experienced fathers themselves. They are well-trained, clinically supervised and fully supported to deliver the programme.

Governance is formal, documented and transparent. Committee members are representative of the community and ultimately responsible for the programme and project.



Young Dads Group – Auckland

The Young Dads Group (or YDG) is a mentoring programme that brings together the skills and learnings of Brothers in Arms, the Auckland Women’s Centre and Te Waipuna Puawai Mercy Oasis in Auckland City.

We aim to provide young dads connected to our services with support and better links with the community.

The objectives are to:

- promote a healthy and safe lifestyle
- learn about safety around their children
- engage with each other and have a sense of belonging
- provide activity-based mentoring for young dads and encourage them to become better fathers.

We have a group of 12 young dads and two mentors. All our activities are developed by the young dads themselves. We focus on strengths, and deliver lessons the young dads have asked to learn.

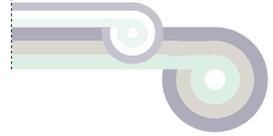
We have a navigator who oversees all that we do. The navigator connects with the three organisations that support the programme, and ensures events happen and the finances and paperwork are sorted. The mentors are two older men (30–35 year olds) who are dads, and who can connect with and create a bond with the young dads.

The components of our programme are:

- **Monthly major events: activity-based connection**
These focus on connecting young dads and mentors, and on having fun. Each event has a theme, such as friendship support, water safety, relationship development or difficulties in fathering. We include guest speakers and discussions.
- **Mini catch-ups: small group connection**
These monthly catch-ups with one of the mentors provide opportunities for young dads to talk to a friendly older guy about things going on in their lives – from tantrums and nappies, to work and relationships.
- **Text support: one-on-one support**
This provides ongoing support from both of the mentors, whenever young dads need it. Mentors provide individual support or connect them to appropriate services.

In the future, we hope to open our group to more young dads, with those currently in our programme stepping up to become mentors themselves.





Waipuna Young Parents' Support Service – Christchurch

www.sjog.org.nz

St John of God Waipuna is a specialist youth agency providing support and development opportunities for young people and their families. Our Young Parents' Service and the Intensive Case Worker help young parents to increase their parenting confidence, and enable easier access to community supports and resources. All services are open to both mums and dads, with a growing number of young dads accessing the service.

Young parents get access to Waipuna through self-referral or through agencies such as Plunket, GPs, midwives, Corrections, and Child, Youth and Family. Many dads find out about us through their partners.

We offer a range of initiatives:

- Our youth-friendly 'YouthTalk Antenatal' sessions, run by the Canterbury District Health Board, are popular with young couples. Both young mums and dads say they find the sessions less daunting than being with older parents in mainstream classes.
- Parenting education and life-skills groups cover a range of topics from positive parenting and healthy relating, to driver licences.
- 'A Natural Buzz' provides young parents with recreational opportunities as an alternative to substance use.
- Trained social workers can visit at home, help to ensure adequate accommodation, link with mental health professionals, and provide support around Child, Youth and Family involvement and Court appearances.
- We link young parents to other activities and agencies that may better meet their needs, including Father and Child Trust, Well Child providers and organisations like Parents as First Teachers (PAFT).
- Staff trained in 'Watch, Wait and Wonder' work with those experiencing attachment difficulties, or with those looking for help to improve connections with their baby.
- Providing childcare, transport and other youth-friendly services on site reflects our commitment to minimising the barriers some young families face. Trained professionals, including social workers, counsellors, youth workers and early childhood educators, work from a strengths-based perspective, and understand that young people are entitled to developmentally-appropriate support and interventions.
- Waipuna's values are the foundation of our work: manaakitanga – hospitality; aroha – compassion; whakaute – respect; tika – justice; hiranga – excellence.



Family Planning Association

– Positive Sexual Health

Family Planning is a registered charity that provides clinical services, health promotion and health education services, resource development and professional training in sexual and reproductive health.

Using the concept 'Tiakina tōu whakapapa' – 'Taking care of present and future generations' we encourage all people to look after their sexual and reproductive health for themselves and their whānau/families.

Young fathers have a significant role to play in planning the number and spacing of their children. They can take responsibility for their own sexual health and fertility. Young men can also encourage and be supportive of their partners in their choices.

Family Planning clinics provide free STI checks and contraceptive services to those aged under 22 years. We deliver education programmes by request, including healthy relationships and sexual health workshops. We also deliver 'It's about Mana', a strengths-based campaign providing positive, action-based messages that promote men as strong and respectful partners.

<http://www.familyplanning.org.nz/News/PromotionsCampaigns/ItsaboutMana.aspx>

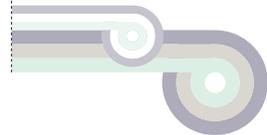
We run 'Open and Honest' programmes for teen parents. These focus on helping teen parents support their own children to develop into sexually healthy people.

Resources developed for use with, or directly for, young men include:

- *New Dads for Young Men* – a booklet for young men about to become fathers. It contains practical suggestions for preparing for their children's birth and beyond (published January 2011).
- *The Man's Manual* – key sexual health information for young men.
- *Our Men – Te Ira Tāne* – a photo resource on developing healthy boys and men to use with individuals and groups to prompt them to explore a range of ways of being a man. It includes representations of fatherhood, and teen dads.

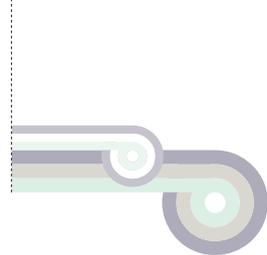
Details of these and other resources are on our website: www.familyplanning.org.nz





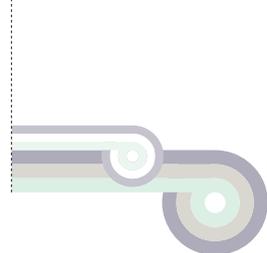
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