Life as a YOUNG DAD
by Mark Bicknell
(who was a young father)

This leaflet is a quick guide to help you understand becoming a young father.

It covers many things including:

- What to expect
- Your responsibilities as a Dad
- Benefits of becoming a Dad
The benefits of becoming a Dad

There are many things that will change in your and your partner’s life after the baby is born, some bad, but many good. So when times are hard - because they sometimes are - just remember how you feel when times are good. From my personal experiences I will briefly describe the benefits of becoming a father.

You will have a great feeling of self-pride when your baby first arrives and during their life as they grow. While they are growing you will gain love and trust from your children. Children give you a sense of purpose, knowing that your child is the person he or she is, due to input from you and your partner. Along with many other feelings you will gain friendships with your children, full of love and trust, giving you a feeling of emotional fulfilment.

To gain all these emotions and feelings you have to be there - time doesn’t give a second chance.
What to expect after your new arrival

When your child is born you can expect many different things; this is a little booklet about some of the things you can expect as a young father. I’ve written this booklet from personal experience as I was a Dad by the age of just 17. As a young father I did not really think about my responsibilities at first, as I had nothing like this booklet to make me think about the true scale of the care and dedication needed to raise a child. I hope this booklet will help you make the right decisions with your child and partner. I hope you have as much joy as I did and still have watching my children grow.

You can expect:

- Sleepless nights
- Changing nappies about 10-12 times in a 24-hour period
- Some sort of change in your partner’s mood
- Less time with your mates
- To care for the child throughout the day and night
- To have to budget your money (a child can cost a lot)
- To participate more in helping your partner with domestic chores

And remember, there are many other changes you can expect - it’s a 24-7 job.
Your roles and responsibilities as a Dad

Making a baby is easy, but caring for baby and Mum can be a strain, especially if you have your own home, with bills needing to be paid as well as other expenses. No matter how hard it may seem at times there is help out there and the pros far outweigh the cons.

Roles and Responsibilities

- To love and care for your family
- To support mother and child
- To be there to listen and talk with
- To guide in decision making
- To take responsibility
- To provide a safe secure home and protect your family
- To teach them self-respect and respect for others
- To set guidelines and boundaries; reward and punish where necessary
- To play with your kids

Of course, there are many other roles and responsibilities but if you do find it hard to manage then there are people out there who can help with benefits advice or support.

Good luck and remember this early time with your child won’t come again.
Ways you can be an active Dad

Being an active Dad is beneficial to the whole family unit. Your children will look up to you in admiration, your partner will have less stress and worries knowing that she is not alone and you will have many emotions and feelings as described earlier in this booklet.

ACTIVE DAD:

♦ Supports his partner in decision making
♦ Spends quality time with the whole family
♦ Encourages his children to do well
♦ Protects his children’s innocence
♦ Is honest
♦ Plays with his children
♦ Attends school plays and parent evenings
♦ Reads to his children

There is a lot of commitment needed to be an active Dad but it is your child’s right to have a Dad who takes part in his child’s upbringing. It can be hard to always find the time to be an active Dad, especially with work commitments, but your child will know who was there for him or her when they grow older, and even if you did not always manage to do the things you wanted, your child will understand as long as you’re honest with them.
Summary and contact details

I hope you find this brochure helpful. If you require further information, or any other information like support groups, all details are listed below. There is a poem on the final page that I believe all parents can relate to.

Good luck and always be there - it is their right.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**CARE FOR THE FAMILY** (CHRISTIAN-BASED)
01277 233 848

**CHILDLINE**
0800 111

**PARENTLINE PLUS**
08088 002 222
www.parentlineplus.org.uk

**HOME-START UK**
Support and information
0800 068 6368

**CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY**
Benefits
08457 133 133

**CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX**
For all benefits, rights and housing advice
Look in the phone book
www.adviceguide.org.uk

**HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION** (West Berkshire)
0118 982 2941

**THE GARDEN CLINIC** (East Berkshire)
01753 635 302

If you would like to read more about parenting, I would recommend Birth to Five. You can find out where to get a copy at www.dh.gov.uk/publications
LITTLE EYES UPON YOU

There are little eyes upon you
and they are watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly take
in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do,
and a little boy who’s dreaming
of the day he’ll be like you.

You’re the little fellow’s idol,
You’re the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you
no suspicions ever rise.
He believes in you devoutly,
holds all you say and do.
He will say and do in your way
when he’s grown up just like you.

There’s a wide eyed little fellow
who believes you’re always right,
and his eyes are always opened
and he watches day and night.
you are setting an example
every day in all you do,
for the little boy who’s waiting
to grow up
just like you.

By Matthew Schrivens