

# Helping teenage boys to become responsible adults

and what Service Designers need to know about them

Bukola Jolugbo (Kiki)

Caroline Jarrett

@cjforms

Caroline and teenage boys

# What do we know about teenage boys?



# What do we know about teenage boys?

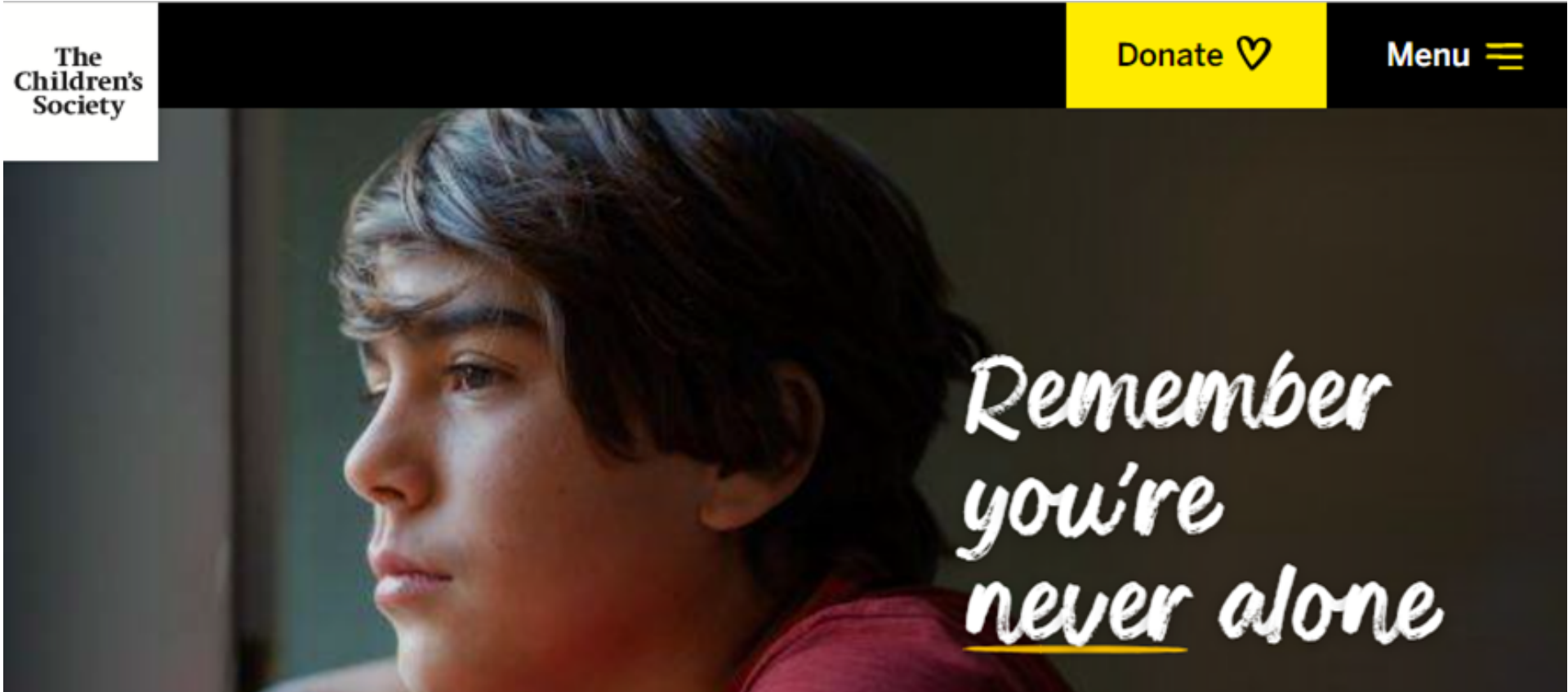
Do you have a teenage boy in your family / household?

Do you typically spend some time with a teenage boy most weeks?

Have you done user research with teenage boys?

Do teenage boys use your service?

Example: There are about 800,000 young carers in the UK



# We are focusing on boys, not girls

We love teenage girls, too. Some of the ideas also apply to girls.

Their teenage experience is different and today we're giving focus to boys.

Kiki and teenage boys

# I run the BoyziiMen Institute



Boys are moving from school to being young adults, usually A-level students on their way to university

They have training sessions on what boys should know before they become adults

We run it over 14 weeks (14 sessions of 1hr), 10 boys at a time, 29 in total so far

<https://joshuasarmy.co.uk/boyziimen-institute/>



# Teenage boys have worse mental health than girls

- Young men report lower levels of life satisfaction than young women
- Teenage boys are more likely than teenage girls to suffer in silence and withdraw instead of seeking help
- Males are less likely to access psychological therapies than females: only 36% of referrals to NHS talking therapies are for men
- Males are three times as likely to have mental health issues than females
- From 1979 to 2005, the ratio of suicide in teenage boys to teenage girls changed from 3:2 to 3:1

## Sources:

- [Factsheet, SouthWest London and St George's NHS Mental Health Trust](#) (lots of references)
- [Men and women: statistics | Mental Health Foundation](#) (lots of references)
- [House of Commons library briefing on Mental health statistics 2021 \(England\)](#) (lots of links to current sources)

# I did some research with teenagers and parents

Around week 10 of a recent BoyziiMen Institute, I asked boys if they were willing to give me feedback on their lives

- 5 chose an interview
- 16 chose to complete a survey
- All Black African ethnic origin

I also wondered about the views of parents and teenage girls, so I interviewed

- 8 parents (4 parents have got both teenage boys and teenage girls, 4 have only got teenage boys) (6 Black, 2 white)
- 2 teenage girls, 15 and 18, both have teenage brothers (both Black)

# More families with teenage boys struggle with communication than families with teenage girls

“He is in year 12 and needs to have started his UCAS prep. When asked for update, he gets upset and would rather not talk about it. I don’t know why he struggles with telling us how he feels or about his progress”

“No, I have to plan my conversation with him ahead if not I won’t be able to get across. It is even worse when the conversation is with the whole family. It is not a good idea, but texting him gets me better results”

“I manage sometimes but I feel it could be better, like it used to be before his 12th birthday. One thing I feel he hates is engaging in difficult conversation. I keep trying but I can do with some help.”

“Oh it is 100% easier and more productive to have a conversation with his older sister. He is always ‘fine’ and ‘got it under control’. I don’t know why it is this tough to get through to him”

# Colleagues will provide support or give responsibility to a young girl in the office over a young boy

“There is a message for a volunteer to do a presentation, I offered because I’ve been writing the presentations for my boss all along. What I got as the response was “thanks but no, we need a more experienced person for this one”. My thought is, how do I gain experience if I am not trusted with responsibilities?”

“Last week, the presentation I prepared was given to A instead of allowing me to present it.”

“I try to express how I feel but I really don’t want anyone saying ‘there he goes, a black boy’.”

# Being a teenage boy is “like a crime”

“Being a teenage boy is like a crime - for us to be heard, we have to go over and above. We struggle to be heard.”

“When I walk into a shop with my friends, people stand to attention and start to watch us. We get attention just because we are teenage boys.”



# There are different views about withdrawal

Teenage boys struggle to connect with anyone about their feelings

We think: they don't want to be connected

They think:

- I'm not supposed to "be weak" so why connect?
- I don't know how to connect
- Adults don't respond to me when I try to connect

We want to show you a video about this

<https://youtu.be/1RIGdF1L3YY>

A thought bubble with a scalloped border and three smaller circles leading to it from the bottom left. The text "Thoughts?" is centered inside in a teal color.

**Thoughts?**

A speech bubble with a tail pointing to the bottom right. The text "Comments?" is centered inside in a teal color.

**Comments?**

Kiki helps teenage boys



# Kiki teaches “10 Success Principles for Teenage Boys”

**Choices:** be mindful about your choices and own them

**Attitudes:** choices open doors for you, attitudes are what keeps you in the room

**Kindness:** being kind isn't being weak, it's being human (listening and hearing)

**Self-control:** 'no' means 'no', respect 'no' when you hear it and say 'no' when you need to

**Giving:** be generous, think about what you can do to make someone else's day better

**Forgiveness:** let go of bitterness to improve your own wellbeing

**Courage:** be willing to dream big and to pursue your dream

**Integrity:** let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'.

**Love:** make yourself open to approach others with a joyful heart

**Purity:** celebrate life like a child, who sees everything from a good place

Some challenges for us

# As adults, can we use and own these principles?

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# How might these principles work for Service Design?

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# Thank you and keep in touch

Kiki (Bukola Jolugbo)

Caroline Jarrett

@cjforms

[caroline.jarrett@effortmark.co.uk](mailto:caroline.jarrett@effortmark.co.uk)

We are both on the #SDinGOV slack

