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# Diana's legacy

iana, Princess of Wales played a variety of roles, from royal princess to media superstar, from fashion pin-up to charity worker. Yet without doubt the role she loved best was that of mother of two sons "my boys". Although she died tragically young, she lives on in their warm, caring personalities and in the sensitive way they want to continue her crusade to care for the homeless and the underprivileged.

Diana found motherhood blissfully fulfilling. Shortly after William's birth in June 1982 she revealed with girlish charm to Maudie Pendry, her father's former housekeeper: "William has brought us such happiness and contentment and consequently

I can't wait to have masses more!" Emotionally scarred by her childhood, Diana was determined that William and Harry should receive constant, unconditional love from their parents. "Her affection for them was unmistakeable," recalled her private secretary Patrick Jephson. "She was warm, expressive and tactile. Very obviously she wanted neither her boys nor anybody else to be in any doubt about her love for them.

Like all small boys, William tried his mother's patience at times. She caught him trying to flush one of his father's shoes down the toilet and he famously set off the panic alarms on his grandmother's Balmoral estate. "William is getting to be quite a handful," Diana revealed to another mother on one of her many walkabouts.

More serious concerns were on the horizon. By the late 1980s the marriage of Charles and Diana was reaching crisis point and in December 1992 the

couple formally separated.

Although only ten, William took the news stoically and said: "I hope you will both be happy now." Diana knew from experience the long-term repercussions that separation and divorce can have on children and she was concerned about the possible effect on William in particular. "He's a child that's a deep thinker and we won't know for a few years how it has gone in. But I put it in gently without any resentment or anger," she noted.

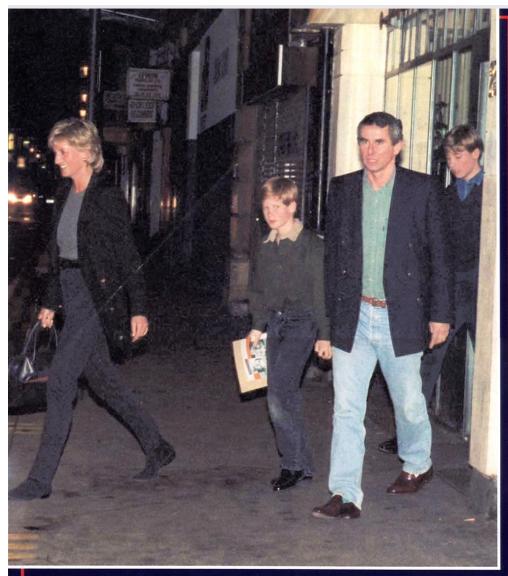
Diana tried to give them as much reassurance as she could. "I hug my children to death," she said at the time of the separation. "I get into bed with them at night, hug them and say, 'Who loves

## THE TIMES TODAY

On This Day: June 29, 1982

### Right royal name for new Prince





Diana and her sons visit the homeless at London's Centrepoint in 1996 (above). Following his mother's example, William is comfortable communicating with people from all backgrounds and ages – as here (below), chatting to a dance leader and other youngsters at a Glasgow community centre. Carrying on his mother's good work, he is to visit a homeless project in Newport, South Wales, two days before his 21st



'I want my boys to have an understanding of people's emotions, their insecurities, their distress and their hopes and dreams'

them most in the world?' and they always say 'Mummy'. I always feed them love and affection – it's so important."

Besides showing them how to express emotion, Diana taught her sons good manners. She impressed upon them the importance of thankyou letters. "If I come back from a dinner party or somewhere that needs a letter, at midnight I'll sit down and write it there and then and not wait until morning because it would wrestle with my conscience. Now William does it – it's great."

Diana was also keen to groom William into a less traditional path of royal service. He was nine when she took him to visit her friend Adrian Ward-Jackson who was dying from an AIDS-related illness. Adrian was being cared for by Angela Serota, an exdancer with the Royal Ballet, who later recalled William "had a mature view of illness, a perspective which showed awareness of love and commitment".

The Princess took William to hostels for the homeless and to night shelters. Cardinal Basil Hume, the then head of the Catholic Church in England, joined them on a visit to the Passage Day Centre for the homeless and told Diana that William "has such dignity at such a young age".

Diana later took Harry on these visits, too, and said of her sons: "They have a knowledge. They may never use it but the seed is there and I hope that it will grow because knowledge is power. I want them to have an understanding of people's emotions, people's insecurities, people's distress and people's hopes and dreams." It is particularly moving that two days before William's 21st birthday, a day of engagements in Wales will include a visit to a homeless project in Newport.

On the night of August 30, 1997,

On the night of August 30, 1997, shortly after arriving at the Paris Ritz, Diana received a call from an anxious William who had been asked by the Buckingham Palace press office to agree to a photo call to mark the start of his third term at Eton. The Prince was worried that focusing attention on him would overshadow Harry, a concern that Diana shared.

The telephone conversation was the last that mother and son would share. A few hours later, in the deserted streets of Paris, the brief life of Diana, Princess of Wales was brutally ended. A thousand miles away. William slept peacefully at Balmoral, little realising his world had changed forever.

William has inherited Diana's looks and blonde hair, her mannerisms and habit of blushing easily, and her infectious laugh. But that's not all. Like her, he is a compassionate and skilled communicator with people from all walks of life. More significantly, he has his mother's strong, independent streak. While he respects his royal heritage he isn't afraid to challenge its conventions. This will ensure Diana's legacy will continue far into this century and perhaps beyond.

