

Teenage Pregnancy in Buckinghamshire

Background

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. The Government launched the National Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in June 1999, as a result of the Social Exclusion Unit Report on Teenage Pregnancy. All local authorities were required to appoint a Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board and Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator.

Teenage conception rates in Buckinghamshire are lower than national rates (see attached graph and tables) however the rate is not falling in line with the rate required to achieve the required 45% decrease from the 1998 baseline to 2010.

The focus of the work of the teenage pregnancy strategy is applicable to all children and young people, not just those who become pregnant, as it involves young people making informed choices in regard to relationships, sexual health and pregnancy.

Buckinghamshire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership

The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Commissioner leads the delivery of the Buckinghamshire Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Overall aims of the Buckinghamshire Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

- To reduce the rate of conceptions amongst 15-17yr olds by 45% by 2010 from the 1998 baseline
- To reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted infections in young people
- To provide comprehensive support for teenage parents to reduce the risk of social exclusion and improve life chances for them and their children their children
- To ensure that 60% teenage mothers are in education or training (EET) by 2010

Factors associated with high teenage pregnancy rates:

1. Education related factors

- Low educational attainment
- Disengagement from school
- Leaving school at 16 with no qualifications

2. Risky behaviour

- Early onset of sexual activity
- Poor contraceptive use
- Mental health / conduct disorder/ involvement in crime
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Repeat pregnancies / abortions

3. Family / background factors

- Living in care
- Daughter of a teenage mother
- Ethnicity – teenage pregnancy rates significantly higher in 'Mixed Black & Black Caribbean' ethnicity. 'White British' are also over represented while 'Asian' ethnic groups are under represented
- Poor parental aspirations

Why Teenage Pregnancy Matters

Teenage pregnancy is strongly associated with the most deprived and socially excluded young people. Difficulties in young people's lives such as poor family relationships, low self esteem and unhappiness at school can also put them at greater risk of early parenthood. Evidence shows that having children at a young age can damage young women's health, well being and severely limit their education and career prospects. The outcomes for their children may also be poorer than children born to older parents.

The facts:

- At age 30 teenage mothers are 22% more likely to be living in poverty than mothers giving birth aged 24yrs or over, and are much less likely to be employed or living with a partner
- Teenage mother are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30 than mothers giving birth aged 24yrs or over.
- Teenage mothers are more likely to partner men who are poorly qualified and more likely to experience unemployment
- Teenage mothers have three times the rate of post-natal depression of older mothers and higher risk of poor mental health for three years after the birth
- The infant mortality rate is 60% higher than for babies born to older women
- Teenage mothers are three times more likely to smoke throughout their pregnancy and 50% less likely to breast feed than older mothers – both factors health negative health consequences for the child
- Children of teenage mothers have a 63% increased risk of being born into poverty compared with mothers in their twenties, have higher mortality rates under 8 and are more likely to have accidents and behavioural problems
- One in three of the most vulnerable girls are at risk of becoming a teenage mother before they are 20 yrs old
- Many young men in the criminal justice system / Young Offenders Institutes are young fathers.

Working towards reducing teenage conceptions in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Teenage Pregnancy strategy focuses upon two strands:

1. Prevention of conceptions and sexually transmitted infections in young people
2. Support for teenage parents – which includes prevention of subsequent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections

Prevention:

It is recognised by Government led at DCSF level, by local agencies that it is not just about sex and pregnancy but also about emotional well-being and the confidence to make informed choices about personal relationships and behaviour.

(Safeguarding and confidentiality issues have to be considered to identify and support children and young people who may be exposed to inappropriate / risks situations including sexual exploitation)

Local measures include:

- Comprehensive age appropriate Sex and Relationships Education from primary education onwards - key in enabling children and young people to make informed choices. Sexual Health and Relationships guidance is also given to young people who are not in school.
- Promotion of the RU Ready? principles to encourage young people to make informed choices on sexual relations and to consider delaying early sex
- The post of the Buckinghamshire Healthy Schools Sex and Relationships Education Consultant was initially funded through teenage pregnancy.
- Funding for PSHE CPD training for teachers and community nurses funded through the national Teenage Pregnancy Unit. Plans to roll this programme out to other professionals who work with young people.
- Sex Matters' sexual health awareness training for staff working with children and young people.
- Promotion of school and community based Young People's Drop-Ins, which provide a single point of access where young people can receive confidential information and support on bullying, stress, medical matters, relationships, sexual health and pregnancy.
- C Card condom distribution scheme
- Integrated working with the local Chlamydia Screening Programme which aims to screen all sexually active young people aged 15 -24yrs old
- Pharmacy Emergency Hormonal Contraceptive (EHC) Scheme free to < 19yr olds
- Joint working with PCT providers to promote Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)
- Ongoing joint working with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) to ensure that there are links in regard to education , information and preventative strategies around risky behaviours
- Parenting programmes – age appropriate from pre-school to teenage talking to children about 'difficult issues' (sex, drugs etc)

Support for Teenage Parents

Effective support for teenage parents depends on good communication and working relationships between Health Services, Education Welfare Services, Social Care, Connexions, School Health, Drug & Alcohol Support Services, Youth Offending Service and others to provide ongoing support for teenage parents.

Local measures include:

- Teenage Pregnancy Liaison Midwife and designated Connexions Teenage Pregnancy Personal Advisers (PAs) - the 'TP Team' who assess every pregnant teenager /young parent and develop a package of care
- Ongoing partnership working with Children Centres and Extended Services programmes – support for teenage parents, Parenting Support Core Offers, young people's services
- Partners follow School Age Parent's Guidance
- Young parent's groups (Baby Steps and Step 2 It)
- Supporting education and training opportunities
- Appropriate housing support
- Promotion of Care to Learn grant which provides funds for childcare so that young parents can continue in education and training

Maintaining the momentum

Documents published by the DfES / DCSF in 2006 / 2007 through the Every Child Matters, Change for Children programme, encourage local authorities and partners to broaden and deepen their teenage pregnancy strategies towards the 2010 target these are:

- ***Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies (July 2006)***
The guidance sets out how local strategies need to develop to take into account of lessons learnt from areas that have been successful in reducing teenage pregnancies.
- ***Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010. (September 2006)***
This highlights the need to reshape services under the Every Child Matters and Youth Matters programmes, which bring a collective focus on addressing poor outcomes for young people.
- ***Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts (July 2007)***
Examines how improve outcomes for teenage parents and to sustain lower rates of teenage pregnancy in the future

Information on above and other aspects of the teenage pregnancy strategy can be found on the Every Child Matters / Teenage Pregnancy Unit website www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/teenagepregnancy and www.dfes.gov.uk/teenagepregnancy

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