

## **Health and Sport Committee**

### **Inquiry into teenage pregnancy**

Note of a visit to Smithycroft Secondary School, Glasgow, on Monday 21 January 2013.

**Members present:** Duncan McNeil (Convener), Bob Doris (Deputy Convener), Aileen McLeod, Drew Smith,

**Scottish Parliament staff present:** Eugene Windsor (Committee Clerk), Rebecca Lamb (Assistant Committee Clerk).

**Glasgow City Council staff present:** Jean Miller, Head Teacher, Deborah Blackhurst, Service Coordinator, Jill Stevenson, Principal Teacher of Pastoral Care, Heather Douglas, Early Years Manager GCC

Members also visited the nursery in the school and met a number of the young parents.

### **Summary of discussion**

- Deborah Blackhurst indicated that Glasgow City Council's default position was that any secondary school pupils who became pregnant would, if possible, continue their education in the school that they already attended. However, this was not always possible and Smithycroft took referrals of pregnant girls from all over the city. Deborah and the social care worker had the biggest remit in relation to pregnant girls who remain in their own schools and would meet the girl concerned, her carer and the relevant school staff.
- Deborah told the members that research indicated that the longer pregnant girls remain in education, the better their start to motherhood and adult life. Some of the support given was simple measures like toilet passes and early lunches. Expectant parents also get the opportunity to look at the base even if they stay in their own school.
- Should the girl already be disengaged with school or have other issues which may indicate the need for a greater level of support, consideration will be given to transferring them to Smithycroft.
- A multi-agency approach is taken, with an individualised programme of care. Each parent is assigned a key worker. In some cases, this resulted in improved attendance, although this might be on a reduced timetable. Smithycroft also provides help with developing parenting skills and personal development including keep fit, smoking cessation, healthy eating.
- Smithycroft also works with young people (including fathers) who have left school, up to the age of 19. Drop in parent and toddler groups are provided. It might also be involved in a care plan where the baby in question is in danger of being accommodated.

- Glasgow City Council has a young people's sexual health strategy, under which the Young Parents' Support Base operates.
- The project is three years old. It is part of a strategic approach across the city, under the strategy mentioned above. It has initial funding for three years from the European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund. This is due to expire in March 2013, but is to be mainstreamed by the City Council with funding from the Education, Social Work services, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Community Planning Partnership. There is an aspiration to have three such services across the city, but this is not possible in the current financial climate.
- Through the life of the project, pupil attendance has improved, as has the awareness of teachers.
- There has been engagement with young fathers from the beginning. It was reported that some fathers remain involved even where the relationship with the young woman had broken down.
- The project had engaged with 160 young people over two and a half years, of whom 18 were fathers.
- There are approximately 270 conceptions amongst 13-15 year olds in Glasgow per annum, of which around 50% go on to live births. There are over 1,000 conceptions among 16-19 year olds.
- It was also noted that cultural diversity in the city meant that some 16-19 year olds would already be married and some pregnancies are planned.
- Each young woman had a personal development plan that was monitored every three months.
- The project was linked to the wider early years strategy through *One Glasgow*.
- It was noted that transport (by taxi) was crucial to the success of the project.
- The City Council also provides an interrupted learning service under which pupils receive tuition at home if they are unable to attend school, though very few pregnant girls receive the service (only two at present).
- It was noted that the girls are teenagers first and there is a need to work through that and support them through the experience of being a teenager as well as being pregnant. Staff often have to be the "attachment figure" for young parents, because that support may not be available at home.
- It was noted that the Young Parents' Support Base did not always receive notification of young women becoming pregnant. Midwives should refer all teenage pregnancies to the Link Midwife for Teenage Pregnancy; however some don't. Education guidance for schools states they should notify every pregnancy to the Young Parents' Support Base and this is happening in most cases. The Family Nurse Partnership programme had started in Glasgow. They have access to information on all teenagers who are pregnant through a computerised system in Maternity Services.

- It was noted that much of Deborah's work was about helping to prevent second and third pregnancies.
- It was noted that there have been no unplanned pregnancies in Smithycroft School since the project was established.
- The young women get access to the careers officers based in all Glasgow schools. When they leave school, and for those who are post school already, they can be referred to the Young Parents Project, a specific careers and development team within Rosemount Life Long Learning Project in partnership with Skills Development Scotland. There was also a strong relationship between Smithycroft Secondary and John Wheatley College. It was noted that some girls were undertaking courses both at Smithycroft and at John Wheatley College. There was a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for life beyond school.
- In regard to transitions, it was noted that the Young Parents' Support Base's own outreach services continued to the age of 19. There was a gradual withdrawal and referral to other agencies like social work, housing and voluntary organisations as appropriate. It was noted that the *One Glasgow* approach should help to link all agencies through nurseries.

Committee Office  
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