

Inquiry into teenage pregnancy

Fife Gingerbread - Teen Parent Response

Due to nature of the questions posed by the inquiry they were reframed in a way more appropriate for the young parents to answer.

Linktown Young Parents Group – 5 young mums age 17-18 years

- a. **Do you have any views on the current policy direction being taken at the national level in Scotland to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy?**
 - o What do you think the government in Scotland are doing to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy?
 - *Nothing*
 - *Stopping people getting houses from 2015*
 - *They have stopped giving some grants for pregnant women*

- b. **Do you have any views on the action being taken at local level by health boards, local authorities and other relevant organisations to reduce teenage pregnancy, particularly in the under 16 age group?**
 - o What do you think is happening in Fife to reduce teenage pregnancy, particularly in under 16s?
 - *Nothing*
 - *You can go to the clinic at any age now to get contraception*
 - *Schools are giving sex education to much younger pupils in P3/4 now – it is interesting to note that only 1 of the 5 mums agreed with this approach, most thought it was too young to be teaching children sex education*

- c. **What are your views on the relationship between higher levels of teenage pregnancy and socio-economic inequality?**
 - o Do you think there is a link between teenage pregnancy and your background e.g. how much money your parents had, where you lived, what school you went to?
 - *All parents stated that they did not believe there was a link between teenage pregnancy and socio-economic status. They said that even upper class girls get pregnant.*
 - *However, they did go on to say that lots of their friends from Kirkcaldy High School had gone on to have children in their teens but that no one from Balwearie High School had done so. This they said was because it was a 'fashion' at KHS and it is a rubbish school but that Balwearie is a good school and the people that go there have more money.*
 - *They felt that the education they received from KHS had let them down. They did not feel the school made any attempt to*

raise their aspirations e.g. by encouraging them to attend college or university. They felt that the school was surprised when they turned up for classes and did not take them seriously when they tried to make an effort. One young mum stated that the school were shocked that she had passed her exams.

- d. What are the barriers and challenges to making progress in achieving positive change in communities that might lead to reductions in the levels of teenage pregnancy?**
- What do you think makes it hard to reduce the number of pregnant teenagers?
 - *The government can't control how people are brought up*
 - *Some teenagers think it is cool to have a baby and look up to older people with children*
 - *It is a fashion in some places to be a young mum*
 - *Peer pressure*
 - *Young people these days act older so they think it's okay to be parents younger*
 - *Most young people have no idea about the realities of bringing up a child and just how hard it is going to be*
- e. What are your views on the current support services available to young parents / young mothers, e.g. range of services, focus of services and whether services are being delivered in the most appropriate settings?**
- What do you think about the support services that are available for teen parents in your area?
 - *There are hardly any but the ones that do exist are good (specifically the groups provided by the Teen Parent Project in Kirkcaldy)*
 - *The groups are the best. Just being able to get out the house and away from your partner. Seeing other young parents and getting to talk to them and let the children play.*
 - *All parents stated that they would not go to groups that were not specifically for their age group (i.e. under 25 years old)*
 - *The ideal would be to have a group 3-5 days a week (at the moment there is a group 1 day a week)*
 - *Groups need to be within walking distance or with travel provided as the majority do not have access to a car and the buses only allow 1 or 2 prams on so they could not all travel to groups together*
- g. Are there specific approaches to reducing teenage pregnancy that are not currently getting sufficient attention in order to affect positive change for children and young people?**
- Do you think there are other better ways to reduce teenage pregnancy?

- *Not really, it should really be up to the individual*
- *Should be telling schools and pupils about the sexual health clinics and that they can get free contraception at any age*

These questions prompted a great deal of discussion with these young mums. In the first instance, they did not feel that being a teenage parent was necessarily a bad thing that should be reduced. They questioned what was the difference between a 17 year old parent living on benefits and a 30 year old parent living on benefits? It was their opinion that circumstances are more important than age, so the government should be seeking to reduce the number of families relying on benefits rather than specially the number of teen pregnancies. All but one had disengaged from school by the start of 4th year, and the one that did stay on until the end of 6th year did so because she was given a monetary reward for each exam result (e.g. £100 for an A, £50 for a B).

They felt it was important to differentiate between accidental teenage pregnancy and planned teenage pregnancy. All of these mums are in a relationship with their child's father and 3 out of 5 had planned to get pregnant which they felt was very different to a 14 year old falling pregnant after a fling at a party.

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6 February 2013