

Inquiry into teenage pregnancy

City of Edinburgh Council

Introduction

The Young Mums' Unit is an ASL provision provided by the City of Edinburgh Council and run by HOTS.

A child or young person is said to have 'additional support needs' if they need more help with their education. Additional support can mean any kind of extra assistance that is more than or different from the education provided in school.

Under the ASL Act Councils are required to make provision to access education and provide opportunity to provide wider achievements.

Young mums are considered as an ASL Service

Being pregnant and a young mum the girls are classed as having ASNs

- vulnerable
- young carers

Added to that many of the girls are LAC and/or have been anxious non-attenders.

Background

Pregnancy during teenage years, presents real challenges for both the young mum and her family. It should not mean the end of education and a girl's aspirations for the future. Underage pregnancy is rarely the first major difficulty a girl will have encountered, she belongs to a vulnerable and often isolated group. It is critical that she gets the support she needs to ensure the best chance of a positive start to her child's life as well as maximising her own potential through education. Access to suitable childcare and transport is an essential part of the support needed. YMU has proved that if these supports are in place young teenage mums can do well. The alternative is all too often a lifetime on benefits, poverty and little or no aspirations for both the mum and her baby.

1.1 Support for Children and Families Department is committed to raising the attainment and achievement of all learners, including those young people who become parents while still at school. The focus of this guidance is on the educational needs of young pregnant women and young mothers because of the impact that disrupted education can have on the future life chances of both the young woman and her child.

It will also signpost how the needs of young fathers can be identified and addressed.

1.2 This guidance is based on the work of the City of Edinburgh's facility for young mums/pregnant schoolgirls known as the Young Mums' Unit (YMU). It is reflective of the good practice developed there since 1983.

The Unit is part of the Additional Support for Learning provision in the City of Edinburgh, run and co-ordinated by the Hospital and Outreach Teaching Service (HOTS). YMU is located within Wester Hailes Education Centre which is a key partner in addressing girls' barriers to learning.

1.3 Before 1983 when YMU was started, teenage pregnancy often meant an end to mainstream education. Teenage pregnancy has been highlighted as an issue which requires focused intervention because of its strong associations with a range of social, health and economic inequalities and exclusion. Poorer outcomes are not only associated with the young women and men who become parents but also with the outcomes and life-chances of their children.

1.4 The approach in Edinburgh was initially developed by Kate Hart who was then a teacher with the Home and Hospital Teaching Service. It was based on existing research, experience and anecdotal evidence which indicated that many of these poorer outcomes are not inevitable if positive supports are put in place. Wester Hailes Education Centre was the first community school in Great Britain. Opened in 1978 it pioneered the idea of life-long learning. Its inclusive ethos meant it could provide the ideal partner for YMU.

Setting up YMU was revolutionary at the time in how it was constructed and education delivered. YMU has had a significant impact on helping young parents and their families positively adapt to their new circumstances.

1.5 Education has a crucial contribution to make towards improving the life-chances of young women who become pregnant when of school-age. Not only can educational provision enable young women to become successful learners, it can also provide a supportive and nurturing environment in which young women can grow in confidence and adapt to their new, dual role of being both young mothers and students. In addition, although an unintended outcome, research and our own anecdotal evidence has shown that pregnancy can be a key motivating factor for many young women to re-engage with learning. There is also evidence that young women who are welcomed back into education are more likely to educational aspirations for their own children.

1.6 Young women who come from areas of high deprivation are more likely to become pregnant and are more likely to proceed with their pregnancy. However, there have been relatively low numbers of referrals from these areas. It should be noted that these figures do not include young women who were at school and who became pregnant in S4 when they were 16 years of age.

1.7 This guidance is based on a wide range of national and local policies which promote an inclusive and holistic education that upholds children's rights. It will therefore be familiar to educational professionals. (Appendix A identifies some of these). Of particular relevance here is the Additional

Support for Learning legislation which identifies young carers as having additional support needs. With the YMU provision the City of Edinburgh Council has shown a commitment to the progress and attainment for all pupils through this creative and tailored educational provision.

Rationale

2.1 This guidance establishes the standard that all young women who are pregnant or who have had their babies can expect to receive, irrespective of their circumstances. Barnardo's document (2011) 'Not the End of the Story – Supporting teenage mums back into education' states

“Too many were ‘unofficially’ excluded for being pregnant; for example. They were asked to leave school for ‘health and safety’ reasons’. Government guidance emphasises that pregnancy is not a valid reason for school exclusion”

The positive approach which has been developed in Edinburgh does not reflect this picture. However we are aware that there appears to be more school-age pregnant schoolgirls who are not referred to YMU or still in school. These guidelines are an effort to ensure that a consistent application both across and within Children and Families will ensure that individualised and tailored supports are offered to meet the holistic needs of young women who become pregnant when of school-age.

2.2 This guidance aims to assist all staff within Children and Families to recognise the needs of school-age pregnant women and young mothers, enabling them to maintain their education, reach their full potential and remain as fully integrated in the education community as possible. It highlights the responsibilities that C&F staff have in this regard, as well as other services the young woman can be referred onto. To successfully achieve these aims staff should:

- Encourage young women to remain involved with education during their pregnancy and in the post-birth period in YMU or
- Re-integrate young women back into learning, particularly if they were disengaged from school prior to their pregnancy.

2.3 The development of this guidance has the additional purpose of countering some negative approaches as issues around teenage mothers attract opinionated debate. Additionally there is no evidence to suggest that the presence of a young pregnant woman within a school encourages other young women to become pregnant. Anecdotal information would indicate that the opposite effect may be the case. It should be noted here that teenage mums have the right to stay at their own school. Schools should be aware that it is discriminatory to indicate either directly or indirectly that a young woman is no longer welcome once her pregnancy becomes physically obvious. YMU is the City of Edinburgh's provision of choice in that it has the expertise and holistic package necessary to deliver the support needed. However, schools and other professionals also have a role in supporting the student and her

family. They need to be reassured that continued involvement in education will benefit their daughter and her ability to successfully support her child.

2.4 In the first instance, young women should be referred to YMU either to continue or re-engage with learning. Anecdotally we have noted after an initial resistance to the idea an initial visit to YMU meeting the key teacher and the girls very often dispels any fears. Only when it is assessed that a young woman will not or cannot engage with YMU, should alternatives then be explored.

Initial responses when first learning of a pregnancy

3.1 The overwhelming majority of young women who become pregnant when of school-age did not plan to do so. It can therefore take time for the girl and her family to come to terms with such life-changing news. For many, letting school know about the pregnancy is an important first hurdle to be negotiated. How the issue is handled by school can be crucial in determining both the young woman and her family's immediate and long-term responses to education and wider offers of assistance.

3.2 A young woman will make a conscious choice about when and who to tell. It is important therefore for her to know that her information will be dealt with sensitively and appropriately. In general, if a young person or her parent / carer does not inform the Head Teacher directly, she should be made aware that the Head Teacher and the relevant Pastoral Care staff have to be informed. Which other school staff are informed should be negotiated with the young woman.

3.3 It is very important for the young woman and her family that the response from the school is non-judgemental and offers reassurance that supports will be available to meet her changed circumstances. In particular, it is important to highlight that educational attainment is still possible and desirable and that the school will look at options as to how the situation can be managed, both before and after the baby is born, taking into account the young woman's individual circumstances. The YMU key teacher is available for advice on issues relating to teenage pregnancy.

3.4 When a young woman discloses to the school that she is pregnant the school must complete the 'Notification of Pregnancy' form and send it to the key teacher at YMU. The key teacher will be able to provide support and guidance to the school on a range of issues.

3.5 In the vast majority of cases the first notification of the pregnancy will come from the young woman and her parent/carer. In very few cases, to date, have young women not informed their parent/carer prior to the school being made aware of the situation. If a teaching professional hears of a potential pregnancy through rumour, often via other pupils, this information should be passed to the Head Teacher and the Child Protection co-ordinator only and discussion should take place as to which member of staff is most appropriate to talk with the young woman.

3.6 All teaching professionals should be familiar with Child Protection Guidelines and how it might apply to pregnant schoolgirls. It is important to have a process in place to enable all staff to identify, assess and respond appropriately to incidence of sexual activity.

3.7 Pregnancy in young women under the age of 16 should be dealt with using the CP guidelines. If it is assessed that the pregnancy is the result of mutually-agreed teenage sexual behaviour and/or a relationship in which there are no concerns of abuse or exploitation, the matter should not be considered a child protection matter: the emphasis should be on ensuring that the young woman's health, educational, social and emotional needs are appropriately assessed and support is offered. If it is assessed that a child protection concern may exist, the usual CP procedures should apply.

3.8 It is recognised that confidentiality is an issue to be considered. Confidentiality is not absolute and can be departed from in exceptional circumstances i.e. where a child protection concern exists. However, in the absence of a child protection concern, young women have a right to have their information rights respected i.e. that personal and private information should not be shared without consent. In the rare circumstance that a young woman has not told her parent/carer of the pregnancy it is good practice to encourage her to do so. However, it is not the duty of the school to inform parents of the pregnancy. Involving either the appropriate Health or Social work professional can assist in this rare circumstance.

3.9 Although, to date, this has not been a frequent occurrence, it maybe the case that at the point when the school is informed, the young woman is unclear as to whether she wishes to proceed with the pregnancy. In such circumstances, staff should support the girl and if appropriate liaise with the involved health care professionals.

3.10 The young woman and her family should be made aware that the school will be informing the key teacher at YMU about the pregnancy. It is helpful to let the young woman and her family know that the YMU key teacher will make contact with them. However, it should be noted that the girl and family may need support in this respect.

3.11 It is also helpful to let the young woman and her family know that the YMU is a provision that has been specifically designed to help young women both during the pregnancy and once the baby is born. The key teacher of the YMU, in particular, will work closely with the school to ensure that any issues are positively and sensitively managed.

3.12 Schools should note that not all pregnancies of which they are made aware will necessarily proceed to full term, whether as a result of termination or miscarriage. If there are signs that a young woman is struggling to cope with the loss of a pregnancy or is unsure whether to continue with a pregnancy contact should be made with Caledonia Youth where specialist nurse counsellors are available.

Working with young women who have poor/nonattendance

4.1 Many young women who become pregnant whilst at school have had attendance issues prior to pregnancy. For these young women re-integration into school can be difficult. However, one of the unexpected consequences for some young women is that pregnancy can act as a real motivating force in developing aspirations for her future. It is important that this potential is harnessed and young women are offered a flexible and encouraging approach which ensures they stay in education.

4.2 For young women where attendance has been an issue, re-integration into learning is useful at any time. Even those close to the official school leaving date can benefit from engagement in learning and may choose to return to S5 and S6. The YMU, as distinct from other learning opportunities, provides a stable and nurturing environment to help girls adapt to a range of emotional and social changes in their lives. The role that a supportive and flexible provision can play in improving young women's mental health and self-esteem by identifying individual needs, should not be underestimated.

4.3 It may be unrealistic to expect all of the young women to attend school on a full-time basis. Options like a phased return, a reduced timetable and /or studying in the YMU base have proved to provide some level of re-engagement. If it is proving difficult to reengage a young woman with learning or to sustain a plan that has been put in place, the key teacher should negotiate a more realistic timetable that fits in with the young woman's role as a parent.

4.4 If a young woman who is attending an alternative educational placement becomes pregnant, the school should complete the notification form as normal. Discussions with the YMU and the alternative provider will then take place as to how they can continue to support the young woman through pregnancy and motherhood.

Educational Planning During Pregnancy

5.1 The key to supporting a young women is regular communication, both formally and informally as soon as possible after a referral is made. The HOTS key teacher should meet with her to discuss their educational progress and any other issues they may need support with. Research indicates that these meetings serve to encourage attendance, help to motivate the young woman and allow the school to respond to needs that will invariably change during the pregnancy and in the post-birth period.

5.2 Alongside her educational needs, a young woman may experience a range of social and emotional issues that may affect her ability to continue to engage with learning. These issues could include perceived bullying by other students, experiencing discrimination, having mixed feelings about the pregnancy, mood swings or depression, conflict with the father of the baby, disruption at home, financial or housing worries. It is important to

acknowledge that these tensions exist. Signposting to appropriate services can be invaluable to the young woman and her family.

5.3 Drawing up a personal learning plan has proved to be a valuable method of structuring the support that the young woman requires. It assists to identify needs, to note how the school can meet these requirements and who has responsibility for putting these plans into action.

5.4 The number of formal meetings that are held will depend on how early on in the pregnancy the school are notified. It has been found that a review every 2-3 months is sufficient. At a minimum, an initial planning meeting shortly after first notification and a review meeting approximately 8 weeks before the due date should be held. Who attends formal meetings will depend on the individual circumstances of the young woman.

The initial planning meeting

5.5 The purpose of the initial planning meeting is to give the young woman an opportunity to be involved in decisions around her future, allow her and her family to discuss their concerns and for them to be reassured the Unit in partnership with the school will try to accommodate her needs. Research indicates that emotional support and re-assurance are of equal importance as practical help.

5.6 It is important that this is a positive meeting where it is explained that it is perfectly feasible for pregnant young women and young mothers to attend school and successfully achieve their educational potential. The emphasis should be on the young woman maintaining, as much as possible, full attendance and continuation of all of her subjects. It is recognised that this may not always be achievable but it sets a tone that educational attainment is still important.

5.7 Points which could be discussed at the meeting include:

- The young woman's current academic potential and work required to maintain or improve on this.
- The expected delivery date of the baby and how this may affect her studies e.g. preliminary examinations, final examinations, portfolio deadlines, work experience etc.
- Immediate requirements in school, including who needs to know, what practical supports are required etc.
- How time off, both during the pregnancy and afterwards, will be managed.
- How to maintain studies during time off e.g. home tuition, work being sent home etc.
- How other professionals can contribute to the support package.
- Childcare
- Transport

5.8 Should a young person want to stay on at their own school it should be explained that YMU is CEC's preferred option for young mums/pregnant schoolgirls as it can provide the needed holistic package including childcare and transport. However if the young woman still wishes to continue attendance at her own school that request should be facilitated.

5.9 Practical supports that can help support a young mothers. These include:

- A toilet pass.
- An 'early class release' pass, to avoid busy corridors, or the rush for the school bus.
- Transport to examinations.
- Additional support to allow the young woman to catch up on any work missed due to absences.
- Supplying school work for the holidays to enable the young woman to 'get ahead' of her class in preparation for time off.
- Arranging online work for easier access.
- Referring a young woman for counselling.
- Booking a careers interview to help a young woman plan ahead.
- Being flexible with uniform requirements as the pregnancy progresses.
- The most important support has been a positive, welcoming and non-judgemental approach by all staff in school.

5.10 It is important to encourage young women to be off school as little as possible. If the school is advised that a young woman cannot attend due to illness in her pregnancy, some discussion should take place as to the nature of the illness. If the illness relates to morning sickness, a flexible approach, allowing the young woman to come to school a little later, has proven to resolve such matters. Authorised absences need not affect the Education Maintenance Allowance criteria providing the school completes an EMA adjustment form.

Reviews / pre-birth planning meeting

5.11 It is good practice to review progress around 8 weeks prior to the due-date to a) ensure that arrangements are in place to cover any work that needs to be completed during the period of absence and b) to discuss arrangements for the post natal period. This is also a useful meeting to evaluate the measures that were put into place during pregnancy

5.12 The development of a plan around the birth-period needs to take a balanced and sensitive approach, particularly taking into account the emotional and physical demands that will be placed on a new mother. Research evidence and experience indicates that if this process is handled sensitively, actually having a plan (even if it needs to be adapted) helps to encourage and motivate young women to return to school and provides reassurance that

- a) they will be welcomed back to school and
- b) that motherhood is not a barrier to learning.

Also, having a structure in place can enable young women to feel a measure of stability during a time that can be unsettling.

5.14 Although a young mother naturally needs time to bond with her baby and adjust to her new circumstances, missing too much schooling will have an impact on her learning. The period of absence post-birth should be dependent on each individual's circumstances. At the pre-birth meeting this issue should be discussed and a provisional return-date should be identified. It should be made clear that this date can be changed if required. Factors to consider include the stage of the school year, if there are deadlines for portfolio work to be submitted, examination dates, the number and level of subjects being taken, and how difficult it would be to catch-up. Experience to date in YMU, indicates that most young women return to some level of learning within a month of the birth.

The role of home tuition in school-age pregnancy

6.1 In relation to school-aged pregnancy, home tuition can be a useful intervention if young women are absent from school for a considerable period of time e.g. just prior to birth, if there is a medical reason that prevents her from attending school or just after the birth when she is adjusting to her new circumstances. Home tuition should be seen as a temporary intervention to support a return to education and should not be used as an alternative to school or over a long period of time. Being at home can be isolating for the young woman and can affect her mental health as well as limit her academic achievement.

6.2 Home tuition is organised through the key teacher from HOTS. The established Guidance in respect of home tuition needs to be followed. If home circumstances are not suitable, tuition can be arranged to be delivered at an alternative venue.

6.3 The school retain full responsibility for the young woman whilst she is receiving home tuition. This can include:

- Assessing completed material.
- Presenting the young woman for examinations, making exam arrangements, ensuring folio completion and the submission of work.
- Providing and reviewing plans.
- Managing child protection issues should they arise.

Again the key teacher will co-ordinate any issues during a home tuition period.

Educational planning post-birth

7.1 Just prior to the young woman's provisional return-date to school a further discussion should be had to plan for the young woman's return. Circumstances may have changed considerably since the last meeting and plans will need to be adapted accordingly. Factors that may influence what educational programmes the young woman is able to undertake will include:

- The young woman's energy levels
- If the baby or young woman is ill.
- The level of support that is available in the family.
- Post-natal depression.
- If the young woman feels ready to leave her baby in the care of others.

7.2 As was the case during pregnancy, schools should be as flexible as possible during this return-to-school phase. Demonstrating a willingness to listen to a young woman's needs can greatly encourage her to remain connected to her social contacts and to learning. Options that have been utilised by some schools in this period have included:

- Extending home tuition for a further period
- Supplying the young woman with additional work for independent study at home
- Agreeing a part-time timetable
- Looking at a short-term phased-return to school
- Ensuring that the young woman is signposted to other appropriate services.
- Authorising time off to attend medical appointments or if the baby is unwell.
- Organising a room for expressing milk and breastfeeding if required.
- Being flexible with uniform requirements in advanced pregnancy.

7.3 Some young women who had originally thought of leaving school after the birth of their baby have re-considered their position once the baby is born. Most of these young women have successfully gone on to complete S5 and S6. Having a flexible approach has proved the most effective way of keeping them engaged with education.

The needs of young fathers

8.1 Whilst this guidance has overwhelmingly focused on the needs of young women who become pregnant when of school age, it is also recognised that schools can offer similar types of support to young men who come to fatherhood at an early age.

8.2 Again, acknowledging that for the vast majority of young men the pregnancy was not planned, they too will have a range of responses and mixed emotions about their potential new role and responsibilities. These may be more emphasised depending on if they have an on-going relationship with the young woman and if they attend the same school. Authorising agreed absences to allow the young man to attend medical appointments and to be present at the birth are examples of how schools can provide support. Pastoral care staff can act as a listening ear and sign-post young fathers to Caledonia Youth who can provide 1:1 support in relationships, communication and negotiation.

One Parent Families Scotland runs a lone father's support group in the Gilmerton area.

Ann Burnett
Depute Head
Hospital and Outreach Teaching Service
City of Edinburgh Council

7 February 2013

Hospital and Outreach Teaching Service Young Mums' ASL Plan

Name:	School/Unit: YMU	Venue: WHEC	Due Date:
D.O.B	Original school:		Referrer:
Recommendation for coursing to be made to WHEC			
Prior Learning	Learning Intentions	Strategies to Support ASN	
<i>Academic</i>		Flexible timetable Part-time timetable Complementary Curriculum (see below) Support from HOTS during maternity leave	
Outreach Teacher:		Date:	
Targets shared with parent and child (please tick when done)			

PSE – Health and Wellbeing		Evaluations	
Curricular area	Strategy	Learning Intentions	Evaluations
Health - mental, social, emotional and physical	NCT trainer - Liz Foster to deliver a programme of antenatal classes, baby massage sessions and 'Rhythmkids', music and movement. To involve Bookstart with girls. (Rhymetime sessions and free books). To plan twice yearly social outings and Santa's visit to the crèche.	Pregnant students will be able to plan for arrival of baby confidently. Baby massage will facilitate bonding between mother and child and promote positive parenting. Young mums will realise the importance of the written and spoken word in encouraging speech development. Will also promote bonding with mums and babies. Will promote peer support and contribute to the group	

PSE – Health and Wellbeing		Evaluations	
Curricular area	Strategy	Learning Intentions	Evaluations
		identity. Young mums will learn to support, plan and work with each other.	
Physical education and physical activity including sport	To participate in WHEC's PE provision (2 hours) whilst ensuring flexibility for senior students to negotiate allotted times/activities. To emphasise formally and informally the importance of physical exercise for themselves and their children.	Young mums will rejoin PE classes after giving birth (they are exempt until after their 6 wk check). Young mums will realise the importance of a healthy lifestyle which will reflect in their approach to their child's lifestyle.	
Eating for health , and safe hygienic practices	To provide sessions on Healthy Eating including keeping food diaries and weight and BMI index monitoring. To be facilitated by Fiona Bell – Wester Hailes Health Agency. Creche staff will have regular input to encourage a healthy diet for the babies.	Young mums will have a healthy approach to food for themselves and their children.	
Personal safety	To provide sessions on aspects of personal safety. Workshops to be provided by Fastforward and Caledonia Youth.	Students will be aware of possible dangers associated with certain lifestyle choices. They will have strategies and knowledge to keep themselves safe.	
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	To provide sessions that will address alcohol and drugs awareness. To be provided by Gemma Burns from Fastforward.	Students will have a thorough knowledge about drugs and alcohol and associated issues and therefore be equipped to make informed choices.	
Relationships, sexual health and parenthood	Caledonia Youth (Paula Ferguson) will deliver a set of 8 sexual health and relationship workshops tailored to the needs of the group. Health visitor , Megan McKenzie, will provide information, resources and parenting advice. To provide discussion workshops around parenting issues and problems.	Students will be equipped with relevant advice on contraception and will be able to explore what constitutes a healthy relationship. Students will be able to discuss gender issues and inequalities with confidence and appropriate knowledge. Young mums will recognise that parenting concerns are universal and not specific to young motherhood. They will become more confident in their parenting which in turn will	

PSE – Health and Wellbeing		Evaluations	
Curricular area	Strategy	Learning Intentions	Evaluations
		give their children a improved start in life.	
Planning choices for schools and beyond.	Careers interviews will be offered on a weekly basis by appointment. UCAS students will be mentored by the Headteacher of WHEC	Students will be able to make informed choices and plans regarding their career pathway.	

**Appendix 4 – Proposed headings for a notification of Pregnancy Form for girls attending school.
Notification of Pregnancy**

Educational Establishment - Form xxxx

Address

Name

Postcode

Phone Number

Date of Birth

If known, how many weeks pregnant is the young woman?

As a result of your risk assessment, has it been considered necessary to make a referral to Child Protection (If so, please provide brief details of the basis of this referral)

Education Services

02/11

Name of pastoral care teacher

Name of Establishment

Phone Number

How, and when, was the establishment made aware of the pregnancy?

Address

What has been the establishment response to date?

Are there any other professionals/agencies involved with the young woman or her family? (Please provide names/contact details)

Does the young woman know that her information is being passed on to Education Services?

Signature of notifying person (SMT) Date of notification

Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Thank you for completing this notification.

Return to:

Teacher in Charge

Young Mums'/Pregnant Schoolgirls Unit