

Youth – Actor of Social Change

“Teenage Pregnancy Strategy”

This document is part of a larger collection of examples of current policies for young people in Europe. The collection is an outcome of a European research project called “UP2YOUTH – Youth: actor of social change?”

The basic idea of the “current practice” collection is to see how current practices and policies relate to young people as active agents in shaping their lives. Therefore, our intention is not a collection of “good” or “best” practices. Rather, it includes also practices, which are interesting because of their relation to young people’s agency but which involve problematic aspects, such as restricted financial resources, a very thin spread, or no clear evaluation criteria. We have applied a searching pattern which asked for “strengths” and “weaknesses”. This explicitly opens space for your own evaluation, because also policies are included, which definitely do have weaknesses, but are highly interesting for specific reasons. Therefore we have to stress that the researchers did not evaluate these practices themselves.

The whole collection can be found at <http://www.up2youth.org/content/view/192/60/>

Section	Indications of contents
Title of programme/ practice	Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
Location	England, UK
Main theme	Young parenthood
Practice/Programme-related keywords	Teenage pregnancy, education, inter-agency
Summary of programme/ practice	The Teenage Pregnancy (TP) strategy was launched by Tony Blair in June 1999 following the release of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report on Teenage Pregnancy rates in England. The SEU report identified that under 18 conception rates in England were the highest in Western Europe; twice those of Germany, three times those of France and six times those of the Netherlands. The TP strategy charged each Local Authority to reduce their under 18 conception rates by 50% by 2010. To further support this the NHS Plan set an interim target of achieving a 15% reduction by 2004.

Target	Evidence clearly shows that having children at a young age can damage young women's health and well-being and severely limit their education and career prospects. Longitudinal studies show that children born to teenagers are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes in later life, and are up to three times more likely to become a teenage parent themselves. The facts are stark: • At age 30, teenage mothers are 22% more likely to be living in poverty than mothers giving birth aged 24 or over, and are much less likely to be employed or living with a partner. • Teenage mothers are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30 than mothers giving birth aged 24 or over. • Teenage mothers have three times the rate of post-natal depression of older mothers and a higher risk of poor mental health for three years after the birth. • The infant mortality rate for babies born to teenage mothers is 60% higher than for babies born to older mothers. • Teenage mothers are three times more likely to smoke throughout their pregnancy, and 50% less likely to breastfeed, than older mothers - both of which have negative health consequences for the child. • Children of teenage mothers have a 63% increased risk of being born into poverty compared to babies born to mothers in their twenties and are more likely to have accidents and behavioural problems. Rates of teenage pregnancy are far higher among deprived communities. The poorer outcomes associated with teenage motherhood also mean the effects of deprivation and social exclusion are passed from one generation to the next.
Objectives of programme/ practice	The TP strategy charged each Local Authority to reduce their under 18 conception rates by 50% by 2010. To further support this the NHS Plan set an interim target of achieving a 15% reduction by 2004. In addition to these reduction targets the TP strategy also recommends that each area: • establishes a downward trend in their under 16 conception rates; • gets more teenage parents back into education, employment and training to reduce the risk of long-term social exclusion; • recognise TP as a high and shared priority; and • develops effective inter-agency working and joined-up approaches.
Content of programme/ practice	The TP Strategy has four overall major components (Parker, 2005): 1) A national media awareness campaign via independent radio and teenage magazines. 2) Joined up action to ensure that action is co-ordinated nationally and locally across all relevant statutory and volun-

	tary agencies (see for instance the strategic coordination outlined in the previous section). 3) Better prevention through improving sex and relationships education and improving access to contraception and sexual health services. 4) Support for teenage parents to reduce their long term risk of social exclusion by increasing the proportion returning to education, training or employment.
Time scale	Duration: A ten year strategy
Programme/ practice design	1) Development of programme/practice: The Teenage Pregnancy (TP) strategy was launched by Tony Blair in June 1999 following the release of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report on Teenage Pregnancy rates in England.
	2) Decision-making actors and process: To implement the TP Strategy each of the 148 top tier local authorities developed a 10 year strategy for achieving local targets of reducing their under 18 conception rate by between 40-60% by 2010.
	3) Management and leadership of programme: Strategic co-ordination is provided by local teenage pregnancy co-ordinators who are performance managed by regional teenage pregnancy coordinators and supported by the government's cross-departmental Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU).
	4) Implementation: Local strategies are led by a teenage pregnancy partnership board with representatives from relevant statutory and voluntary stakeholders.
	5) Legal framework: A government initiated strategy.
Resources involved	No information

Evaluation	Evaluation process: Strategy was evaluated and a final report was published (Parker, R. (Co-ordinator) (2005) <i>Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Evaluation. Final Report Synthesis</i>. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University College London and BMRB International. Available at www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk [retrieved 17 January 2008]) Results / impact of programme: The Final Report of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Evaluation 2005 outlines that during the first four years of the Strategy, conception rates for women in England aged under 18 have fallen. This is a reversal of the upward trend seen in the period immediately preceding the Strategy, and a change of course from the largely static rates of the previous two decades in the UK. It also runs counter to the current trend in the European countries used as comparison areas, which is towards stable or increasing conception rates. At the same time, although teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are still the highest in Europe, the proportion of pregnancies which are terminated has increased so that we are moving closer towards, though still some way from, the abortion ratios seen in other countries. The rate of decline has been steeper in areas characterised by higher social deprivation and lower educational attainment, and in areas that have received more funding to implement the Strategy. This clearly suggests that the Strategy has been well targeted at areas of greater need that have benefited the most. Assessment of programme/ action/ practice in terms of sustainability: The TPU has recently produced a <i>Teenage Pregnancy: Good practice and self-assessment toolkit</i> (TPU, 2006) to facilitate the work of practitioners and policy makers at regional and local levels with responsibility for teenage pregnancy. This resource, available at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk, brings together current advice and guidance on the partnerships, strategies and interventions that need to be in place if under-18 conception rates are to be reduced and the reduction maintained in the long-term.
Contact information	www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk
Other doc related to the programme/ practice	No information