

Governors' Information Bulletin

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REDUCING TEENAGE PREGNANCY – HOW CAN SCHOOLS AND GOVERNING BODIES SUPPORT THIS COUNCIL PRIORITY?

For many years the rates of teenage pregnancy in England have been a cause for concern. The Government's 10-year strategy to reduce teenage pregnancies by half by 2010 (from 1998 figures) is now showing promising results.

England's rate of teenage conceptions has fallen by -11.8% (from 41,089 pregnancies in 1998 to 39,683 in 2005).

Calderdale has achieved a reduction of –20.5 in the same period, testament to the great work happening in Calderdale to support the choices of young people.

Reducing teenage conceptions is a priority in both the Calderdale Children & Young People's Plan and in the Local Area Agreement for Calderdale.

Why are teenage conceptions such a serious problem? We know that young people who are vulnerable to early pregnancy are likely to experience other negative factors in their lives, low attainment at school being the principle identifying factor above all others.

Young people who become young parents are far less likely to go on to post 16 education, or to get back in to education or training later in life. They and their children are likely to suffer significant health and wealth inequalities and the cycle of poverty (and poverty of aspiration) begins again.

Calderdale Teenage Pregnancy strategy is overseen by a Partnership Board which includes representatives from local authority and health care services. Each year they publish an action plan which is then implemented by all partner organisations.

Your help is needed to prevent young people becoming pregnant and to support young parents to achieve and do the best for their young families.

What can Governing Bodies do?

Governing bodies now have a duty to support the well being of the pupils under their care. The measures a school can take to address teenage pregnancies will also help them to address the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes.

The new duty for Governors is very welcome but school governors have always wanted to support what is best for the children and young people their school supports.



The new duty perhaps formalises that and provides a way to empower schools and governors to put in place the measures known to work.

This will take some bravery!

The best thing a school can do to prevent pregnancies is to implement any of the range of prevention services available within their school.

Schools are often afraid to venture into that arena as they may think this will be contentious with parents, however in a Calderdale Talkback survey, over 91.1% of respondents asked for Sex and Relationships education to be provided in secondary schools. 84.1% called for access to sexual health and contraception services linked to schools too.

In Calderdale we are most fortunate in that we have excellent programmes running to support schools with prevention measures.

The CHOICES sex and relationships curriculum is heavily weighted towards relationship support first and foremost. All the evidence shows that the earlier young people start to have sex, the more they regret this and the less likely they are to use contraception.

We need to be letting our young people know this. **CHOICES** is a complete scheme of work for years 7-11 and is supported by a development officer (working with learning services to help schools to implement the scheme)

Become a Healthy School. Good sex and relationships work is necessary for your school to attain the Healthy Schools status. The Healthy Schools team at Heath can help you to develop policies and put them into practice.

The Extended Schools programme is looking at ways of setting up sexual health advice services, attached to school sites and run by youth workers and health professionals. Extended school services can include discrete contraception services for those young people who need them.

The PSHE accredited course for teachers and school nursing staff is extremely well attended in Calderdale. Learning services and Calderdale PCT Public Health team provide comprehensive support and guidance for those teachers and others participating every year.

Speakeasy courses – designed to help parents to communicate with their children and young people around tricky subjects, can be made available to all schools who feel this would be useful to gain more acceptance of sexual health issues within their school. There are already some excellent examples of good practice within Calderdale schools – look out for the **CHOICES Best Practice showcase** later in the year.

If you have concerns or feel uneasy about implementing sexual health programmes within your school do get in touch with the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator for Calderdale (joanna.nichols@calderdale.gov.uk) or speak to the Learning Services Healthy Schools team (trevor.harris@calderdale.gov.uk)

They are available to come to out to Governing bodies to discuss the range of support available and the options you can choose from to suit your own school environment.