

# Briefing Note

**Title:** Care Leavers up to age 18 that are pregnant or teenage parents

**Prepared by:** Laura Wood **Date:** 2nd March 2018

**Intended audience:** Internal ☐ Partner organisation ☐ Public ☐ Confidential ☐

## Purpose

To provide an update regarding what actions have been taken since the initial report came to the Corporate Parenting Board in May 2017.

The report highlights what progression the local authority has made in ascertaining and promoting pregnancy preventative services and/or support services that are available city wide for Care Leavers (CL) that are pregnant and/or teenage parents.

## Overview

The City of Wolverhampton Council is working together with partner agencies to provide support services to expectant parents, young parents and young people who have had their children removed due to concerns for their child's welfare. In addition to this the local authority are aiming to improve young people's education and knowledge regarding sexual health and parenting to ensure that only those who are ready to become parents choose to do so.

## Background and context

Some of the issues facing Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CL) which can result in LAC/CL becoming teenage parents:

- History & culture of low aspiration.
- Attachment-related difficulties and negative previous experiences resulting in a longing to have a family of their own to love them.
- Disrupted education and elevated level of SEN.
- Negative assumptions around LAC and CL.
- Lack of education regarding sexual health.
- Substance misuse and chaotic behaviours.

When the report came to Corporate Parenting Board in May 2017, the following were expectant parents and/or young parent figures:

	Total	Female	Male
LAC	3	1	2
CL under 18	1	0	1
CL over 18	47	29	18 – 3 are unsure they are the father
Total	51	30	21

NB: Three of the young people in the above statistics have more than one child.

It was acknowledged that the way in which data was collated needed to be improved, it was agreed that there will be specific classifications once the new ICT system Eclipse goes live, unfortunately this has not happened yet, date to be confirmed. Therefore, I am unable to offer comparative figures for the general population in respect of the number of babies removed from parents at present.

In May 2017, we were aware that we had the following services within the City of Wolverhampton Council:

**Preventative work:**

- The LAC nurse is co-located one day a week within LAC to support increased partnership working with workers and encourage young people to access weekly support regarding sexual health.
- Drop in Fridays for CL at The Way Youth Zone where the LAC nurse is readily available for advice, support and guidance.
- EMBRACE - Wolverhampton Sexual Health Service.
- Members of the LAC Transition Service are trained in C card distribution to ensure young people can receive regular contraception and chlamydia testing.

**Support Services for young parents:**

- Young parents group every Sunday morning at The Way, which teaches young people about core parenting skills whilst supporting them to build resilience and a sense of community.
- Early help services to ensure the young person has specific support regarding their parenting skills, this is a 'whole' family approach.
- Family Nurse Partnership who are specialist midwives visiting young people twice per week until their child is two years old.
- Specialist supported accommodation for young parents such as Vine Square and Seacole.
- City wide sexual health services.
- LAC transition team monitor pregnant LAC/CL more closely to ensure they are adequately supported and that their child is safeguarded.

**Breaking the cycle of removal into Local Authority care:**

- The switch project.
- Breaking the cycle project.

**Progression since May 2017:**

A monthly multi-agency Care Leaver Pregnancy and Sexual Health Steering Group is chaired by the Senior Social Work Manager within LAC Transitions. The objectives of the Group are to consider the following:

- Ensure all agencies have an awareness of the issue facing LAC and CL when they are expecting a child/become parents.
- Ensure all agencies know each other's role and responsibilities supporting increased communication.
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- Increase knowledge and/or develop preventative services.
- Increase knowledge and/or develop support services for young parents.
- Increase knowledge and/or develop 'breaking the cycle' of removal of a young person's child into local authority care.
- Highlight the gaps in services and provide recommendations.

**Services now in place:**

- Puju Taloy (Participation Officer) is completing workshops with health visitors and nurses to ensure they have an awareness of the issues pregnant CL/parents face. There is closer liaison regarding potential referrals to MASH/involvement and access to care first to ensure midwives have relevant details to enable them to adequately support CL and their child.
- All midwives and nurses to attend total respect training – There will be 40 practitioners trained in total respect.
- Emma Allan-Smith the named LAC nurse is an intensive nurse whose role is to support the health needs of CL, she offers 1:1 sessions/home visits which are offered to all CL.
- An updated Expectant Parent Policy is in the process of being finalised by Rachel Warrender, Quality and Improvement Officer, to ensure that all workers know how to adequately safeguard parents and their unborn child.
- There is an additional LAC nurse post specifically to support the LAC Transition service and complete medicals up to 50 miles out of area which will enable increased readily available support.
- Indi Group runs from The Way every Friday, this supports CL parents with independence skills which will enable them to parent appropriately.
- Updated specific sexual health training for LAC Transitions staff has taken place.
- There has been an audit of teenage parents which involved consultation regarding their experiences. A case analysis has been drafted from this consultation looking at common themes, awaiting report.
- There is a Facebook page and twitter account for the EMBRACE service, this provides up to date information regarding sexual health services including clinic details, the links are now shared on our Facebook page.
- The Partnering Families team, previously known as the Family Nurse Partnership, is proactively supporting first time mothers aged up to 25 who are vulnerable. When their child is aged one they will review if they can be transferred to a health visitor, if not they will continue up until two years old, this is an intensive programme of support with highly skilled professionals. CL will get priority for this service and second time mothers will now be considered. Partnering Families team are providing the LAC nurse with updates on LAC on their caseloads to ensure they are all adequately supported.
- Young people can access counselling support via Wolverhampton Star Services, provided by Barnados.

**Ideas for progression of support:**

- Practice virtual babies – There have been active debates regarding the use of these dolls as they would need to be supported by a specific programme of prevention work. The Way has priced up some options but they would need to develop specific training that goes along side allocating the virtual dolls. The Way has stated they would be able to fund half

with the other half funded from elsewhere, no one on the Steering Group has any funding available at present, the Steering Group are awaiting exact costs. If this could be progressed CL could access the LAC Transition training flat to have a 'taster' of what it would be like to live independently with a child.

- Nova runs a Young Parent Programme for mothers and fathers which is a 26-week programme, the education, employment and training coordinator from LAC Transition is going to start working in partnership with Nova regarding this.
- Seacole Court, Vine Square and Talent Match are said to offer a father's programme which we are in the process of ascertaining more information.
- Informal sexual health information sessions for CL – These will be quarterly at the training flat with pizza and a free hair cut provided by WOW hair salon – Full sexual health screenings and contraception drop will be available. There will be separate male and female sessions.
- Family support worker role supports intensive direct work regarding health, keep safe, basic sexual health and contraception – this need to be formalised into a work programme.
- Information leaflet regarding support offered to young parents as part of the care leaver local offer.

#### **Gaps/Recommendations:**

All professionals within the multi-agency Steering Group felt that there has been an increase in young people keeping the child after unplanned pregnancies as we do not have local facilities to undertake terminations, the nearest clinic is in Tipton which young people struggle to access due to distance and levels of support available. Young people will not attend "clinics"/ "groups" in fear that they will be seen/too far to travel.

Currently discussed regarding sexual health within schools is not mandatory, we have been advised that this is soon to become compulsory.

There is minimal support for young males/fathers, the group have been unable to ascertain support for males which already has funded attached, the majority of the support is focused around females.