

## **HULL TEENAGE PREGNANCY SUPPORT SERVICE**

Mainstreaming engagement with young fathers in its service for young parents is a key concern for Hull's Teenage Pregnancy Support Service. While each of the four Teenage Pregnancy Advisors has a specialisation – health, education, housing, fathers – all work holistically with any client (male or female) who presents; all have been responsible for developing some new initiative that is drawing fathers in to the core of the service; and all look to identify gaps in support for fathers, for the team to work on.

### **Registration & assessment**

Young fathers can self refer; and when a young mother presents she is asked about the father(s) and/or father-figures in her child(ren's) lives – and the fathers' details will be recorded. The service will send a "welcome" letter directly to a dad; or give it to the mother to give to him.

Initial concerns regarding data protection were clarified with the Fatherhood Institute and with Hull City Council data protection team. As a result, the Health Worker changed the referral forms to ensure that fathers' details were equally important. Confidentiality issues around contacting the father if his parents did not know about his fatherhood were solved through practical strategies, such as the sealed envelope given to the young mother, or by telephoning the young father on an agreed number.

An earlier 'add on' dad's section on the mother's registration form was replaced by a comprehensive Father's Assessment Form. Among the wide range of topics covered is child contact, with spaces for legal issues and the date of last contact. Assessment revealed substantial needs among the young fathers that were not being met; led to TPSS holding each individual parent's case file separately (rather than in couples); and showed that young fathers weren't being 'CAF-fed'. TPSS then worked with the CAF Team to change this.

### **Referrals & partnerships**

Hull TPSS now ask referring agencies to provide the father's name, and have worked successfully with some to ensure their referral forms include the father's details. Repeated contact with important referral agencies such as Connexions keeps visible the TPSS offer to engage with young men who are fathers; and TPSS has worked with the Housing Department to increase their identification of young fathers, and to provide support packages; and with all local secondary schools, to help them identify young fathers-to-be.. TPSS also utilises the Council's direct referral systems to Relate and Family Mediation to help young couples look at relationship issues.

A partnership with the PCT, including providing training to local midwives, is making fathers more welcome within maternity services; and TPSS have helped raise local Children's Centres awareness of how to extend their welcome to dads. The parenting sub-group has taken the issue back to their agencies. And TPSS are also part of Hull's 'Involving Men' network – a multi-agency group developing father-inclusiveness across the city.

### **Reaching out to dads**

TPSS scrutinise their own and other local materials and services to ensure that dads are being explicitly mentioned – the terms 'mothers and fathers' are used instead of

'parents'; information on paternity leave is included in ante-natal leaflets; and breastfeeding resources (including a local video) are now directed at both parents.

## **Services**

Most of the work is one-on-one, or in couples – not in 'fathers' groups'. Young dads often present with housing or benefits issues and move on to accept a much wider range of support, including parenting skills. School-age boys have been supported in telling their parents; and the service has negotiated with their school around attending ante-natal appointments and classes.

The TPSS makes sure that the father's role is covered in every part of its structured 18-week ante-natal programme, including breastfeeding and smoking (whether or not fathers smoke is part of their assessment). Young dads engaged with ante-natally come to the morning child-health post-natal drop-in (a quarter to a third of the parents attending are now fathers). An out-of-hours drop-in has been developed to meet the needs of fathers and mothers who can't attend during the day.

## **Training**

The whole TPSS, as well as related agencies (Stonham Teen Parents, local Children's Centres, some teachers, health visitors etc.) have undertaken the Fatherhood Institute's 3-day accredited training in Working with Fathers. And key staff members, including the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, have also been on Including Men's 4-day accredited 'Developing Men-Friendly Organisations' training.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Within its own service, TPSS have started to monitor the numbers of young fathers being referred, the numbers assessed and the numbers worked with, so failure to engage can be spotted and outcomes tracked.

Since no other agencies were recording data on fathers, a data group has been set up locally to actively involve agencies in recording the number of teenage fathers in the city – crucial to the planning of service provision. And TPSS are working with Connexions to ensure their staff ask all young men if they are fathers or expectant fathers, record these details – and cascade this to other agencies.

Hull TPSS has conducted a consultation which has revealed young fathers' (and mothers') experiences of walking through the process from confirmation of the pregnancy, through the ante-natal period, the birth, and becoming a young parent. As a result, gaps in provision have been clearly identified; and are being closed.

## **Contact**

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