

Being a teenage parent

National Teenage Pregnancy Midwifery Network
www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/ntpmn

Teenage parents: who cares? A guide to commissioning and delivering maternity services for young parents (2nd Edn, 2008)

The Department of Health, Teenage Pregnancy Unit and the Royal College of Midwives produced this guide to help commissioners and local Teenage Pregnancy Strategies plan and deliver maternity services that young people trust and use. This revised edition includes sections on the poorer outcomes and access to services for teenagers and their babies; how improving maternity services can help PCTs and Local Authorities meet a range of targets and policy goals; the importance of multi-agency working in commissioning and delivering services for this group; and a toolkit of useful resources.

Available: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00414-2008>

Getting maternity services right for pregnant teenagers and young fathers. A practical guide for midwives, doctors, maternity support workers and receptionists (2008)

For all involved in the maternity care of pregnant teenagers and young fathers: including practitioners working in mainstream services or areas where there are no dedicated services for teenagers and all who want to improve the service they offer to young people. It sets out reasons why it is important to improve the maternity services offered to young parents, and offers practical guidance on working with pregnant teenagers and young fathers.

Available: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00673-2009>

Pregnant teenagers and diet – a guide for professionals

A guide for professionals who work with pregnant teenagers but don't have specialist training in nutrition. It covers why pregnant teenagers are at particular risk of poor diet how to talk effectively to pregnant teenagers about changing their diet, how to help a pregnant teenage problem solve, and the key positive and negative messages about a healthy pregnancy diet.

Available: www.tommys.org

Being a teenage parent

The young woman's guide to pregnancy – a healthy pregnancy (2009)

This comprehensive guide has been written and designed especially to appeal to young women aged 16–19 with text, pictures and real life stories all featuring young pregnant women. It covers topics such as what to do when you find out you're pregnant, emotions, diet, exercise, smoking and alcohol, antenatal care, how the baby develops and preparing for birth.

Available: www.tommys.org

Multi-agency working to support pregnant teenagers: a midwifery guide to working with Connexions and other agencies (2007)

The Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Department of Health, and Royal College of Midwives produced this guide in 2007 to support midwives in providing optimum care for teenagers. It explains why routine information sharing with other agencies (with the mother's consent) is critically important to meet their needs and to help them achieve better outcomes for themselves, their partners and their children. It suggests some straightforward mechanisms for the sharing of information between maternity services and other agencies, and also provides examples of care pathways specifically for pregnant teenagers.

Available: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFES-0107-2007>

Supporting teenagers who are pregnant or parents – Sure Start Plus National Evaluation (2005)

The findings of the national evaluation of the Sure Start Plus pilot programme carried out by the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London, were published in 2005.

Available: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/teenagepregnancy/a0066273/teenage-pregnancy-research

Reaching out to pregnant teenagers and teenage parents: innovative practice from Sure Start Plus pilot programmes (2005)

Examples of practice considered effective by staff and/or teenagers, which provides a snapshot of the range and diversity of services for supporting teenagers developed through the Sure Start Plus pilot programme.

Available: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/healthandwellbeing/teenagepregnancy/a0066273/teenage-pregnancy-research

Experiences of pregnancy and parenthood among young people in and leaving local authority care: implications for policy and practice (2006)

Available: www.ncb.org.uk

Being a teenage parent

There are lots of good things about being a young parent but there can also be extra stresses and problems. There are times when you might still feel you would like to have someone to take care of you. There will be other times when you want to be free to do what you like without the responsibility of a child.

It will make a difference if you are on your own with your child or if you have a partner. It will make a difference if you have the support of your family or feel unsupported by family and friends. These things can make it much easier or much harder to be a teenage parent. Being a parent is one of the most difficult things you can do, but it is one of the most important – and it can be fun.

Looking after your child

- Children need love and affection. Give your children lots of cuddles and tell them you love them many times a day.
- Children are eager to learn and need lots of things to do. When they are very young their parents are their best playmates. They like:
 - to be talked to
 - to be read to
 - to be sung to
 - to be danced with
 - to be taken for walks
 - you to play with them and their toys
 - you to lie on the floor and let them crawl over you.
- Children need your time – they want you to be around them and to take notice of them. This might mean giving up things you want to do and it might mean making out you are interested in what they are doing, even when you don't feel like it. Your time and attention helps your child to feel loved.
- Young children need to be closely watched, especially near water (even nappy buckets).
- Children can get into all sorts of things when you are busy. It is important to make your house and outdoor area as safe as possible. Washing up detergents, laundry powders and medicines need to be kept in a high locked cupboard.

Being a teenage parent

- The best toys for young children are often ones you don't have to buy. Children love:
 - saucepans and saucepan lids
 - pegs or lids to put into containers
 - walks in the park and picnics
 - home-made play dough
 - jugs and water to pour
 - cushions on the floor to crawl over
 - cardboard boxes of different sizes to crawl through and into, and to make into houses.
- Change the toys occasionally to give variety. Keep a special toy for a treat.
- Join a library (and toy library) to borrow books and toys at no cost.
- Take children to a playground or join a playgroup.

Looking after yourself

Children need you to look after them but you can't do this well if you don't look after yourself.

- One of the things you may find hard as a young parent is the loss of your friends who don't have children. Sometimes you feel that you don't have anything to talk about any more. By joining a young parents' group you will make new friends who have similar lives to yours. Here you can have fun, your children can play with other children and you can talk over any problems you share with other young parents.
- It's OK to need your own space. Arrange someone reliable to care for your child so you can have a night out, go shopping or do something special. All parents need a break.
- All parents have times when they get really busy and times when they get upset. If this happens, take a break, ring a friend or someone you trust and talk about it. Always make sure your child is safe first. Often being outside can make you feel less stressed so taking your baby for a walk around the block in the pram, or your toddler to the local playground can help.
- Even though you are a young parent it is important to still plan for the future. Some areas have college programmes designed for young parents and they may have a creche on site.

Being a teenage parent

Getting help

- Most parents want to be seen as being able to cope well. They want others to think that they know how to be a good parent. Sometimes they worry that if they ask for advice people will think they are not good parents. This is wrong. A good parent asks for advice if they need it.
- Young parents often believe they can do everything themselves and don't want older adults interfering. No matter how old parents are, they need information, support and advice from others and everyone needs to feel that it is safe to say we don't know sometimes, without feeling ashamed.
- Ask other young parents where they have found support.
- Sometimes young parents feel that they are being judged when they go to an agency, a doctor or a clinic for help. It is important to look around until you find someone you feel comfortable with.
- If you have problems with professionals not understanding what you want:
 - think about what you want from them
 - write it down
 - practise saying what you need and why, without getting angry
 - ask if there is a worker at the agency who works with young parents
 - take a friend with you.
- Be willing to listen to family members when they give advice. The more ideas you get, the more ideas you have to choose from. It doesn't mean you have to follow the advice. Choose what feels right for you.
- Ask workers you trust for information, advice and/or a referral to people they know who will be able to help you. Or contact:
 - www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm
 - www.tommys.org
 - www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/
 - www.youngminds.org.uk

Being a teenage parent

Remember

- Your child loves you more than anyone.
- Be wise enough to learn from others.
- Be smart enough to say 'I don't know'.
- Get lots of information so you have plenty of ideas to make good choices.
- Everyone is allowed to make mistakes – mistakes are to learn from.
- Use the 'survival instinct' strengths that you develop as a young parent.
- Find support for yourself and use it. Don't be ashamed to ask for help.

This leaflet has been adapted from a leaflet produced by
South Australia Children, Youth and Women's Health Service.
www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=122&id=1831