

London Borough Redbridge

A POLICY FOR THE RETENTION AND RE-INTEGRATION OF PREGNANT TEENAGERS AND TEENAGE PARENTS IN SCHOOL

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

a) Tackling Teenage Pregnancy

The Governments Teenage Pregnancy Strategy was launched in 1999 in response to the report of the Social Exclusion Unit. The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe. The Social Exclusion Unit reported that the risk of becoming a teenage mother is almost ten times higher for a girl from the lowest social class compared to a girl from a professional background. Teenage mothers are less likely to finish their education, less likely to find a good job and more likely to end up bringing up their child alone and in poverty.

The Government has set the following targets:

- Reduce the under 18 conception rate in by 40% by 2010;
- Establish a firm downward trend in the rate of under 16 conceptions by 2010
- Increase the participation of teenage parents in education, training and employment, to reduce their risk of long term social exclusion.

Redbridge Teenage Pregnancy Strategy has a detailed Action Plan which sets out how it aims to achieve the Governments targets and teenage pregnancy forms a part of the Schools Organisational Plan

Education and schools are a key stakeholder in terms of delivering the Teenage Pregnancy action plan and have an important role to play in contributing towards key objectives, including:-

- All primary and secondary schools to have a post June 2001 written Sex and Relationships Education Policy;
- Increased knowledge among teenagers of the risks of sexual activity;
- Increased awareness among teenagers of the availability of contraception and where to obtain advice and services;
- Development of negotiating skills to resist pressure to engage in sexual activity
- Reduce the total number of days lost in education by teenage mothers;
- Greater involvement on the part of schools to accommodate the needs of teenage mothers;
- To reduce the risk of long term social exclusion by minimising disruption to the continuity of educational provision;

- To ensure access by pregnant teenagers and school age parents to a wide range of advice, guidance and support from Health, Social Services and the voluntary sector.

2. RETENTION AND RE-INTEGRATION OF PREGNANT SCHOOL PUPILS/YOUNG MOTHERS

SCHOOLS RESPONSIBILITY

I. Initial Disclosure of Pregnancy or Possible Pregnancy

When the school becomes aware that a pupil is pregnant or thinks she may be pregnant staff must not offer or guarantee pupils unconditional confidentiality because of possible emerging child protection concerns. However, in all instances staff should explain the rationale for any referral and seek approval where possible. Staff are not legally bound to inform parents. A member of staff who finds out that a pupil is pregnant or may be pregnant should ensure that the pupil receives full information about services in her local area, for example pregnancy testing, termination services or specialist services such as Brook, how to access them and has the opportunity to talk through the options.

(In all instances of pregnancy in young women under 16, members of school staff should speak to the education Welfare Service to discuss whether the Child Protection referral procedures should be followed. If there is any likelihood that the pregnancy is the result of abuse there should be immediate discussion with child protection staff in school, Education Welfare, Social Services Department or the Police).

A referral of should be made to the Senior Education Officer Lynn Jago (020 8708 3913)

II. Continuation of Pregnancy

In cases where a pupil has decided to continue with her pregnancy, the headteacher will need to be informed so that arrangements can be made for her continuing education.

The headteacher should inform relevant members of staff and **in consultation with the pupil**, nominate a member of the pastoral staff or a Learning Mentor to take responsibility for the pupil's welfare and continuing education. Steps should be taken to ensure the pregnancy is dealt with sensitively by both teachers and pupils within the school, respecting the pupil's wishes for confidentiality.

The headteacher should ensure a referral to the designated Child Protection Co-ordinator has been done.

III. Retention of the Pupil in School

The school's aim should be to keep the pregnant pupil or school age mother in learning. This means in all cases keeping the pupil on the school roll, even if she may not be able to attend for a period of time; keeping in touch with her progress and planning for her re-integration into school. The school should ensure that the pupil continues in school for as long as possible before the

birth, up to six weeks before (unless there is a medical reason). A meeting should take place with the girl, her parents/carers and the Education Welfare Officer to discuss and put in place a plan on how her educational needs will be met during her pregnancy. **Pregnancy is not a reason for exclusion. Health and Safety should not be used as a reason to prevent a pregnant pupil attending school.**

The school with the Education Welfare Officer should undertake a risk assessment as part of the plans to keep the pupil at school (see attached copy).

The maximum period of authorised absence for pregnant school pupils/young mothers is 18 calendar weeks to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child.

Absence for ante-natal classes for young mothers and fathers should be classified as “authorised”.

IV. Responsibilities Whilst Pupil Out of School

In all cases the school should keep the pupil on the school roll, even if she may not be able to attend for a period of time. The school should keep in touch with her progress, provide work and liaise with the Tuition Service on the continuity of her education. If health allows the pupil should return following the authorised period of absence.

V. Re-integration back to School

Following the birth of the baby and a period of “maternity leave” (within the 18 weeks) plans should be made for the girl to return to school with the minimum of disruption. A meeting should be held with the girl, her parents/carers, appropriate school staff and the Education Welfare Officer to plan her return. The school should be prepared to offer a flexible re-integration programme including part-time attendance for a period if appropriate. This should be reviewed regularly with the pupil, parents, Education Welfare Officer and school staff.

Where both parents attend the same school, the school should be supportive of both parents in their responsibilities for caring for their child.

For children who are in public care the Designated Teacher for Children and Young People in Public Care should be involved in discussions (This teacher should seek support and guidance from Redbridge’s Advisory Teacher for Children and Young People in Public Care) and review of the care plan and Personal Education Plan (PEP) for the pupil to ensure her educational needs are considered alongside her other needs.

VI. Learning Mentors

The DfES Planning Guidance for LEAs on the role of Learning Mentors sets out their responsibilities for those pupils who are identified as needing extra help to overcome barriers to learning.

3. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

I. Provision of Education Out of School

In accordance with the Education Act 1996 LEAs have a duty to provide suitable education for all the pupils in their area either by ensuring sufficient places at school or by making alternative arrangements for those who are unable to attend school through illness, have been excluded or some other reason (including pregnancy).

For pregnant school pupils and young mothers of statutory school age the LEA will support tuition in conjunction with the school, if deemed necessary, for the period of 18 weeks "maternity leave" and for any sustained period that the pupil is not in school for medical reasons.

Responsibility of the Education Welfare Service

Education Welfare is responsible for:

- monitoring the number of pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers of statutory school age
- securing appropriate integration and re-integration packages into mainstream education
- liaising with the Redbridge Childcare Information Service and Care to Learn to provide suitable childcare facilities if required to enable the young person to return to education
- liaising between the young person, her parents, the school, Health, Social Services, Connexions and voluntary sector
- ensuring the young person has access to appropriate counselling services
- ensuring the young person has access to advice on parenting skills and other practical support from Health, Social Services and the voluntary sector
- assist schools to adapt their practices to accommodate the needs of school aged mothers

III. Data Collection

LEA's must collect data on participation and achievement of **all** pupils in and out of school. As part of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy LEA's are now required to collect separate data on the participation and achievement of teenage parents. This data should also include information on transition to further education and provide information on ethnic background. Schools will be asked to provide relevant information regarding pupils who are pregnant.

Supporting Documents:

- Referral Pathway Flowchart
- Maternity risk Assessment Checklist for school pupils
- Teenage Pregnancy / Young Mothers Education Action plan
- Redbridge Anti-bullying policy

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