What is the incidence of teenage conception and pregnancy?
The UK has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe, though this has been falling in recent years, and figures from the Office of National Statistics released in February 2015 indicate that it is currently at its lowest level since 1969. It is important to consider rates and incidence of teenage conception as well as teenage pregnancy, as young people may choose to terminate a pregnancy; the Local Government Association estimate that around half of pregnancies amongst teenagers end in abortion.

In Leeds, we have seen a year on year decline in teenage pregnancy rates since 2006, though our rate per ten thousand of population remains higher than the national average. Teenage conception rates vary across the city, with some areas seeing higher levels of need than others.

Are teenage parents and their children at risk of poorer outcomes?
There are some poorer outcomes that young parents are particularly vulnerable to. National information from the Local Government Association indicates that 15% of all young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are teenage mothers or pregnant teenagers, while these young people are also more likely to have lower levels of qualifications, and a higher risk of living in poverty. Teenage mothers are also at higher risk of post-natal depression, and the infant mortality rate is higher among children born to teenage mothers.

What work is taking place in Leeds to reduce teenage conception rates?
The local authority Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood team delivers a range of bespoke sessions and programmes in both primary and secondary schools across the city, which aim to reduce rates of teenage conception. These sessions include the Tackled programme, in partnership with Leeds Rugby Foundation, which focuses on improving the sexual health of boys and young men through topics such as healthy relationships.

As well as working directly with young women and men, the team support and train staff in secondary schools in delivering core sex and relationship education topics, and have trained a number of facilitators in the Speakeasy programme. This programme supports parents and foster carers to confidently discuss growing up, sex and relationships with their children.
What support is available for teenage parents in Leeds?

We have a range of services in Leeds to support teenage mothers and fathers through pregnancy and into parenthood. These services include specialist midwifery services for young women under the age of nineteen, antenatal education and parenting programmes including Baby Steps, and the Family Nurse Partnership service.

The local authority Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood team works in partnership with multidisciplinary teams to improve education and wellbeing outcomes for school-age parents and their children. There is a strong correlation between poor school attendance and poorer outcomes such as NEET, and the team aims to ensure that the education of young mothers and fathers is not disadvantaged by pregnancy or parenthood. They work closely with the pupil and their family, the school and colleagues in the attendance improvement service to address barriers to attendance and support young parents to re-enter education, employment or training.

The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Team also have links with the Market Place to support young people’s emotional wellbeing, children’s centres and early start teams, and Connexions, who help support young parents into employment and training.

What can practitioners do to support young people they work with?

If practitioners are working with a young person who discloses that they or their partner are pregnant, it is important that they are supported to consider their options. They can have the pregnancy confirmed by their GP, or at sexual health services such as The Market Place, who can also offer information and advice on contraception and sexually transmitted infections. If they do not want to continue with the pregnancy, this information from the Leeds Sexual Health website may be useful.

Practitioners should refer the young people to the Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood team using the email address below, and notify the Family Nurse Partnership and midwifery services to ensure the young person can access appropriate support. All of the secondary schools across the city have teachers who have had additional training in supporting teenage parents, so the young person should be encouraged to tell their nominated teacher. Providing it is safe to do so, young people should also be encouraged to tell their parents about the pregnancy.

Key contacts and further information

There is a range of information, advice and guidance for teen parents in Leeds available through the Youth Information Hub. The Leeds Sexual Health website has information for young people about other options such as terminations, as well as information, advice and guidance about sexual health and local services for young people. For details of support services in relation to emotional wellbeing, visit the Market Place website.

The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Team can be contacted via earlyhelptp@leeds.gov.uk, or on 0113 395 1214. You can also contact John May, the Re-integration Officer with the team: john.may@leeds.gov.uk.

One minute guides homepage