

National Resource Centre for those working with Young Parents
Newsletter September 2010

Young Parents Survival Guide

The second edition of the Young Parents Survival Guide, created by Treoir and funded by the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme will be available at the end of September. The first edition was a huge success, is now out of print but is available to download from www.treoir.ie.

While some of the articles which appeared in the first edition are repeated in the second edition – *Crisis Pregnancy, 10 Top Tips for Brand New Dads, 10 Survival Tips for Mums, Baby Blues, Legal Bits, Money Matters, Staying in School* etc. – there are some exciting new articles in the second edition. These include *Tips for Tantrums by David Coleman, Shared Parenting, Living with Your Parents, Sleep Issues, Ways to Cope with a Crying Baby, When to Call the Doctor* etc.

The new Young Parent Survival Guide will be available free of charge from Treoir: LoCall 1890 252 084, info@treoir.ie and you will be able to download it from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie.

Changes to the Back to Education Allowance Scheme for 2010/2011 academic year.

Minister for Social Protection, Éamon Ó Cuív TD, announced changes in relation to BTEA which will come into effect immediately.

- Previously, a person who wished to take up a 3rd Level course could do so after getting a relevant social welfare payment for 12 months. Now this period is set at 9 months.
- Until now, a person could apply for BTEA in respect of a 3rd Level course, providing they were commencing their course at year one. Now this has been changed to allow a person to avail of BTEA

where they previously did not complete their course and are returning to the second or subsequent year of their 3rd Level course.

The qualifying period for 2nd Level courses remains at 3 months.

Statistics on women under 20 giving birth in Ireland

Treoir has updated its statistics leaflet on *Births to women under 20, 1999 - 2009*.

The number of births to women under 20 fell slightly from 2,426 in 2008 to 2,223 in 2009.

The birth rate (number of births per 1,000 women under 20) has remained relatively stable since 2004, varying between 17.4 and 16.3.

The number of married women under 20 giving birth remains relatively stable since 2005 ranging between 160 and 176 in 2009.

The Central Statistics Office has begun to publish information on the percentage of women outside marriage giving birth where both parents are living at the same address. For those under 20 this number has risen from 16 per cent in 2007 (402) to 22 per cent in 2008 (498) to 24 per cent in 2009 (537).

The Statistics leaflet is available to download from Treoir's website www.treoir.ie/publications.

Not the end of the story – supporting teenage mothers back into education. Published by Barnardo’s UK 2010.

“Teenage mothers who are not lucky enough to have supportive families are an isolated and vulnerable group.... At an age when their peers are still in school or college or taking their first steps into work, teenage mothers risk being left behind – struggling to care for a baby on their own, dependent on benefits and constrained by a lack of suitable childcare.”

Not the end of the story looks at 38 young mothers trying to re-engage with education and what helped them move forward.

The researchers found that teenage mothers tend to have had poor experiences of school before pregnancy, which presents an ongoing barrier to their motivation to return to education. Too many were ‘unofficially’ excluded for being pregnant; for example, they were asked to leave school for ‘health and safety reasons’. Government guidance emphasises that pregnancy is not a valid reason for school exclusion.

Childcare was the single most important factor in enabling young mothers to return to education. Willingness to use childcare was strongly influenced by its location; on-site nurseries were preferred.

Despite the popular stereotype of girls becoming pregnant to get a council house, many were unaware of the benefits available to them and were struggling to make ends meet. Some were made homeless by their parents; others were living with their babies in unsuitable hostels.

Living independently was hard to manage, especially where girls had been housed away from their local communities. Until housing issues were resolved, they were generally unable to contemplate a return to

education.

Two main benefits support young mothers returning to education in the UK:

1. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available across the UK to 16 to 18-year-olds who stay in education or training.
2. In England, Care to Learn will pay up to £160 (up to £175 in London) per child weekly to a registered childcare provider while a parent under 20 is studying.

Key recommendations

1. Needs assessments

Barnardo's UK recommends carrying out an assessment using the Common Assessment Framework or similar for all mothers under 18 years when they first book in with a midwife, providing access to a lead professional and a range of supports to meet their needs.

2. Suitable childcare provision

Teenage mothers need childcare which is publicly funded, available to all teenage mothers (as it is for university students at present), on-site or nearby, supportive to teenagers and open to babies and not just two-year olds.

3. Unofficial exclusions

Barnardo's UK believes that certification that a young person is not fit to attend school should come from medical professionals only. Despite the Government guidance that emphasises that pregnancy is not a valid reason for a school to exclude a child, teenage mothers had experienced exclusion on apparently spurious grounds.

4. Financial incentives to learning

The report makes various recommendations relating to the Care to Learn, and the Education Maintenance Allowance.

5. Maternity leave

Barnardo's UK believes that maternity should not excuse young mothers from participating in education or training, but greater clarity and guidance is needed from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) about how much time young women may take as maternity leave.

Teenage mothers are more likely to have premature babies

This study entitled *Preterm birth and reduced birth-weight in first and second teenage pregnancies: a register-based cohort study* was funded by the Health Research Board and published in the open access journal, BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, July 2010.

The study identified 3,636 women who were aged between 14 and 17 at the time of birth, 7,506 mothers who were 18 – 19 years and 45,211 mothers who were 20 – 29 years in the north of England. This latter group was the reference group.

The research found that there were parallels between social deprivation and teenage pregnancy and that more than one third of the teenage mothers came from the most socially deprived areas. Women who gave birth during their teenage years were at increased risk of pre-term delivery. The risk was higher for younger teenage mothers than for older teenagers and in the 14 – 17 group the risk was greater in second pregnancies. Dr. Ali Khashan from University College Cork, who was involved in the study, said while it was likely that the premature birth

risk was related to biological immaturity, it was also possible the increased risk of premature delivery in a second teenage pregnancy was related to numerous complicating factors, such as greater social deprivation and less prenatal care.

Professor Louise Kenny, a Health Research Board clinician and consultant at Cork University Hospital said “A first pregnancy may be the first and only time a pregnant teenager interacts with health services and this opportunity (for health education and the promotion of contraception) should not be overlooked”.

TEEN PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

A Date for your Diary!

The TPSP 10th Anniversary Conference

Supporting Young Parents and their Families– learning from the experience of the TPSP

Date: Friday December 10th 2010

Venue: NUI, Galway

Cost: €30 per person including lunch and conference proceedings.

Since the year 2000, 11 TPSPs nationally have supported over 3,000 young parents with all aspects of their lives such as health, relationships, accommodation, social welfare entitlements, legal issues, education, training, child development, parenting and childcare.

As well as a panel of expert speakers, the Conference will include the following workshops sharing the accumulated expertise of the TPSP:

- *Managing life as a young parent*
- *Supporting young parents with their health & well-being*
- *Working with young fathers*
- *Parenting issues for teenage parents*
- *Supporting young parents in education & training*
- *Values and attitudes towards teen parents*
- *Being a parent and unmarried – the legal implications.*

The conference will interest anyone who has contact with young mothers and/or fathers and with their families – such as schools, health services, family support services, training organisations, social services, youth groups, parents groups, childcare providers etc.

For more information or to book a place contact:

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