

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 June 2011	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Teenage Pregnancy Commission outcomes and recommendations	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR CATHERINE MCDONALD, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Establishing a Teenage Pregnancy Commission is a key priority of this council - driven by Southwark's very high levels of teenage pregnancy, and the impact of teenage pregnancy on young people's life chances.

I launched the Commission in November 2010. It brought together members from across Southwark's communities to recommend actions which would reduce local conception rates at an accelerated rate by 2014. The Commission presented its report to me on 4 May 2011.

When I set up the Commission I asked that its work should be focussed over a matter of months not years, giving the council recommendations in Spring this year so that we can start to make a difference quickly. I also asked that it should consider young people's choices, behaviours and aspirations, as well as their access to and knowledge of contraception. And I asked that Commission challenge the council to do things differently, focusing on what works, and, particularly in these cash constrained times, recommend actions that will have greatest impact. I am delighted that the Commission delivered on all this - and more.

Esy Oluwafemi, the Commission's independent Chair has done a wonderful job in driving the Commission forward, producing a report that is informed by a cross-section of Southwark's community. Tremendous thanks to Esy - and to everyone who took part in the Commission.

The Commission has succeeded in bringing our communities together to tackle this vital barrier to young people's wellbeing, and provides the basis on which to create a legacy to sustain the work of the council and the community in improving the life chances of our young people. I recommend the report and its recommendations to the cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That cabinet notes the report of the Teenage Pregnancy Commission and its recommendations, as described in Appendix 1, and considers opportunities to actively support the implementation of the recommendations across all cabinet portfolios.
2. That the cabinet agrees responsibility for developing an implementation plan and

accompanying governance structures for the commission's recommendations rests with the Strategic Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

3. That the cabinet notes the need for any future communications campaign to be balanced in its messages of delaying sex and pregnancy, and promoting the safe use of contraception, to ensure that young people are encouraged and supported to make positive choices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. Reducing teenage pregnancy rates is a key priority for the council, as articulated in the borough's Children and Young People's Plan. Much has been achieved locally, with the rate of teenage conceptions falling over 25% in the decade since the 1998 baseline. Although the most recent results, for 2009, show a further 6.7% reduction on 2008 rates, the borough's rate remains one of the highest in the UK. We have remained ambitious to further improve our rate of reduction, and recognise that to do so, we need to build capacity within our community to tackle this barrier to the wellbeing of our young people.
5. A Teenage Pregnancy Commission was established as set out in the June 2010 cabinet paper 'A Fairer Future for all in Southwark'. Esy Oluwafemi, of local teenage parent charity Wisegem, was appointed as the independent chair of the Commission, which brought together members of Southwark's diverse communities, including young people, parents, representatives from community, voluntary and faith groups, health and education practitioners and professionals working with young people.
6. The Commission was tasked with presenting the cabinet member with recommended actions to reduce local teenage conceptions at an accelerated rate by 2014, including how to:
 - Better target services at those most in need
 - Overcome the issues and obstacles facing our communities and schools
 - Meaningfully engage parents, carers and young people
 - Develop a consistent communications message
 - Establish a legacy that will sustain the work in Southwark
7. The Commission was formally convened in November 2010, and met at least monthly until March 2011, through which it reviewed current council and partnership plans and strategies, and local and national best practice evidence as well as hearing evidence from experts in the field. It also conducted extensive consultation which gathered the views, experiences and ideas of those living and working in the borough. These included more than a dozen focus groups with a wide selection of young people, parents, faith and community groups, hospital staff, schools and youth professionals as well as local community councils.
8. The Commission presented its report and recommended actions to the cabinet member on 4 May 2011, and these are attached as Appendix 1.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy implications

9. The Commission's recommendations build on existing council and partnership policies and strategies, including the 2010-2013 Children and Young People's Plan. This set out partners' commitment to ensure that all young people and their families have access to good-quality sexual health and relationship information, advice and guidance, and that young people have increased access to contraception as and when they need it. It also committed partners to provide targeted information and support on a range of services including sexual health, educational and self-development opportunities to at-risk groups.
10. The Commission's findings and recommendations explored four themes, as follows:
 1. *What are the reasons behind our high teenage conception rates?*

As found nationally, the risk factors leading to teenage conception are complex. Locally, the high rate of terminations, and variable quality of education about sex and contraception were highlighted as key factors in our local high rates. The Commission recommends an increased focus on identifying and supporting vulnerable young people through consistent, sustained support, increasing awareness of and education about all forms of contraception, and raising young people's aspirations and self-esteem.

2. *What role can parents and carers play in addressing sexual health and teenage conceptions?*

Parents and carers are universally seen as one of the biggest determinants in a young person's choices around sex and relationships, yet parents often feel unsure about or disempowered in engaging in this aspect of their child's wellbeing. They called for support in talking to their children about the issue and for greater dialogue with schools about their child's education on this issue. The Commission recommends developing training and support programmes for parents and carers as well as more widely promoting training for all those working with young people and their parents.

3. *What influence do values, faith and culture have on teenage conception rates?*

All contributors to the Commission's investigations recognised the highly positive influence values, faith and culture have on a young person's choices. There was recognition that there is much expertise and passion for supporting young people in our communities and that this should be the basis on which to build future activity. The Commission also highlighted the varying quality of sex and relationship education in schools and the community, and that this is key to raising young people's knowledge and self-esteem. Its recommendations include developing opportunities for mentoring vulnerable young people, as well as broadening sex and relationship education to include emotions, self-esteem and behaviour. This should be promoted across schools and youth settings, as well as through the borough's communities, so as to engage and educate young people and their parents.

4. *How to challenge the myths surrounding sex, relationships and teenage parents?*

Young people and their parents hear many different and inconsistent messages about sex, relationships and teenage pregnancy, and this fosters confusion and myths. The Commission recommends taking a bolder, more honest approach to communications in this area, developing a message that is based on choice, respect and being safe, and which focuses on the consequences of teenage pregnancy and encourages young people to delay pregnancy until the 'right' time. It hopes that this message will be promoted widely across the borough.

11. The Commission's recommendations represent the consensus voice of those living and working with young people in the borough. This model of service co-design with our communities represents a new way of working around the issue of teenage pregnancy, and provides a solid foundation on which to build further collaboration in terms of implementing the recommendations and realigning service provision around them.
12. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategic Management Group, a joint management group of council and health officers, is currently charged with strategic oversight of provision for young people's sexual health and teenage pregnancy prevention and support services. It is currently developing new governance arrangements to provide opportunities for our communities to remain involved in the design and delivery of services, and to ensure that these arrangements are aligned to the council's democratic decision-making arrangements, including the refreshed arrangements for community councils.
13. The refreshed group, with anticipated strong involvement of members, professionals, community champions, young people and parents, would be charged with leadership and accountability for implementing the commission's recommendations, as approved by the cabinet. The group will report to the Children and Families Trust, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
14. The implementation plan will include a prioritisation of the recommendations, including quick wins and longer-term goals. It is anticipated that an initial plan will be drawn up by mid-July.

Community impact statement

15. Teenage pregnancy is an issue that can affect all sections of the community, and equality and diversity issues were central to the development of the Teenage Pregnancy Commission, and underpin its recommendations. The commission itself was representative of our communities, including members across age, ethnicity, culture and gender. A full community impact statement will be developed alongside implementation plans, to ensure that no section of our community is disadvantaged by the implementation of the recommendations. In particular, preliminary data suggests that some ethnic and cultural groups are more affected by the issue than others, and this aspect will be explored fully in developing plans to implement the commission's recommendations.

Resource implications

16. The council's budget contains provision to deliver services to improve young people's sexual health and reduce teenage pregnancy. For 2011/12, provision has been made within the early intervention grant, amounting to £150,000. The implementation plans will be drawn up within this funding envelope, and efforts will be made through the Teenage Pregnancy Strategic Management Group and other partnership bodies to bring partners' resources to implementing the recommendations. Given the tough financial climate, it is also all the more imperative to ensure that the actions in the implementation plan are based on 'what works' and have the maximum impact.

Consultation

17. As detailed in paragraph 6, the commission consulted extensively across our communities. Its membership itself was also representative of the borough's communities and provided the opportunity for members of our community to directly contribute to

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

18. Cabinet is advised to note the potential equality implications as set out in the report and in particular to note the analysis of the implications when required to consider the implementation plan.
19. The general duty under s.17 of the Children Act 1989 requires the council to provide services to support the welfare of children in need within its area; a child in need includes a child under 18 whose health and physical, intellectual, social, behavioural development is likely to be impaired without such support.
20. Under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989, the council has statutory safeguarding responsibilities towards children who are in their care and a duty to promote the welfare of those who have been in care.
21. For those young people who do not fall within the auspices of the Children Act 1989 support due to age, cabinet is also advised of the wellbeing power contained in s.2 Local Government Act 2000 which enables the council to act to promote and improve the social and economic well being of the area.

Finance Director CS/0157/FH

22. The financial implications are as set out in the body of the report .

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children and Young People's Plan 2010-2013	Children's Services 160 Tooley Street SE1 http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200165/southwarks_children_and_families_trust/1484/children_and_young_peoples_plan	Fiona Russell 020 7525 3923
Fairer Future for All in Southwark (Cabinet report June 2010)	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street SE1 http://moderngov.southwarksites.com/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=10200	Everton Roberts / Paula Thornton 020 7525 4395

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Teenage Pregnancy Commission report and recommendations

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Catherine McDonald, Children's Services	
Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services	
Report Author	Fiona Russell, Principal Strategy Officer, Children's Services	
Version	Final	
Dated	8 June 2011	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	10 June 2011	