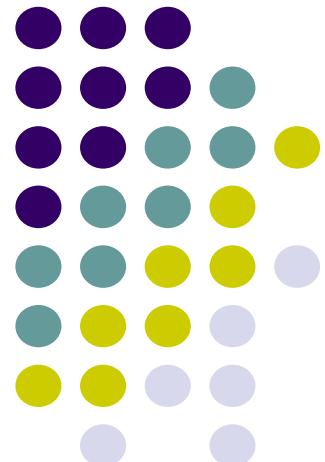


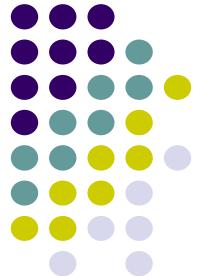
# **Pregnancy's good for your education!: dislike of and disengagement from school, teenage pregnancy and the route to social inclusion**

---

Dr. Alison Hosie  
Research Consultant

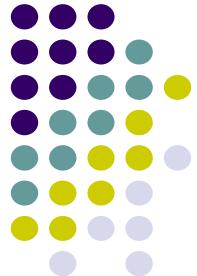
[ali@alisonhosie.co.uk](mailto:ali@alisonhosie.co.uk)  
[www.alisonhosie.co.uk](http://www.alisonhosie.co.uk)





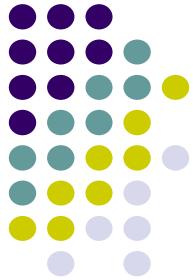
# Why the concern over the education of pregnant young women and young mothers ?

- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy 1999
  - PM's forward: *"We must also do more to support teenagers if they do have a child. They should be strongly encouraged to complete their education and keep in touch with the job market."*
  - Government goal: Achieve a reduction in the risk of long term social exclusion for teenage parents and their children.
- Teenage pregnancy = increased risk of social exclusion
  - Poverty, Social disadvantage, Vehicle to transmit intergenerational poverty



## Why the concern over the education of pregnant young women and young mothers ?

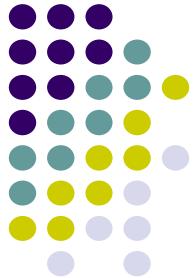
- Previous UK research
  - Many young mothers have a higher rate of social and educational disadvantage than women who defer parenthood until their twenties or later
  - Pre-existing differences between teenage mothers and their non-parenting peers account for a large proportion of the observed negative outcomes of teenage motherhood



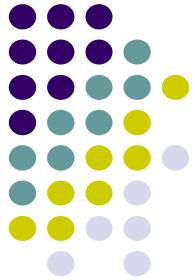
## Why the concern over the education of pregnant young women and young mothers ?

- Pregnancy at school often leads to a disruption of education or arises within the context of previous disengagement (formal and self-exclusion) from school.
- ‘Education, Education, Education’ = tackling social exclusion
- Alastair Darling: *‘Teenage girls doing badly at school are more likely to become teenage mothers than those who are doing well. This is why the Government’s educational policies – raising standards in schools, reducing truancy and our wholesale assault on illiteracy – are also policies against social exclusion’*

# Policy initiatives tackling social exclusion



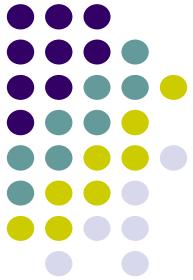
- *Education Action Zones, Education Maintenance Allowances, Health Action Zones, SureStart, Connexions & New Deal for Communities*
- The Standards Fund Teenage Pregnancy Grant
- Sure Start Plus
- Care2Learn



# Teenage pregnancy & disengagement from education

- The risk of teenage pregnancy has been strongly associated with low educational aspirations and achievement
- Disengagement from school and teenage pregnancy : cause/effect?
  - Disengagement preceding the pregnancy
  - Prior history of disengagement
- Strong statistical relationship between dislike of school and an increased risk of teenage pregnancy
  - Evidence backed by numerous qualitative studies

# Sample & Methods



- Semi-structured interviews with 93 young women in 10 LEAs in England.
- LEAs:
  - education provision, geographical spread, teenage conceptions, deprivation & ethnic variation.
- Interviewees:
  - 28 pregnant during the academic year 2002-3;
  - 35 mothers during the academic year 2002-3;
  - 30 conceived in earlier academic years and were now aged 16-19



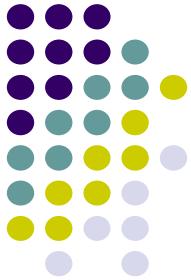
# Profile of the young women

- *Av. age of women at conception = 14.7*
- *Av. school year at conception = year 10 (range:8-11)*
- *85% White, 4% African, 4% Caribbean, 2% Black Caribbean and white, 2% Bangladeshi, 1% Black African and white, 1 % Asian and white*
- *91% British/ Dual Nationality, 3% Irish, 6% other*
- *27% had mothers who were teenage mothers.*
- *Av. age of baby father at conception was 17.1 (range 13-23).*
- *95% of fathers were aged 20 or under.*



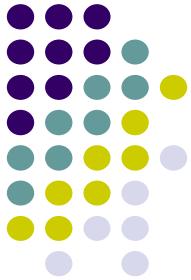
## Educational experience pre-pregnancy

- Most young women enjoyed primary school (87% with v.good /excellent attendance)
  - ¼ experienced being bullied/ witnessed the bullying of others
  - 18 – bullied by staff: 5 – bullied by pupils
  - *One of the teachers was nasty to my friend, because she wasn't as fast at writing as us and she couldn't speak properly, he used to pick on her a lot, and one day like she was getting something out of the desk and we were working, and he slammed the desk down on her fingers. Katie, 16.*



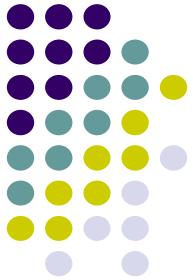
## Educational experience pre-pregnancy

- 27 out of 93 considered their overall attendance pre-pregnancy to be poor
- 55 were not attending school regularly when they found out that they were pregnant
- Disengagement: commonly 'self-exclusion' rather than formal exclusion
  - unnoticed, unrecorded and not acted upon by schools or LEAs



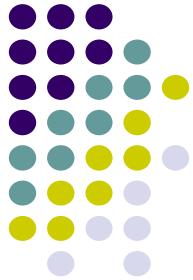
## Dislike of secondary school

- 21 / 93 had enjoyed their overall secondary school experience prior to pregnancy
- Reasons for dislike and disengagement
  - Difficulties with specific teacher/s (36)
  - Bullying (21)
  - Difficulties with specific classes / subject/s (20)
  - School rules (10)
  - Difficulties/ boredom with work (9)
  - Everything (9)



# Dislike of school

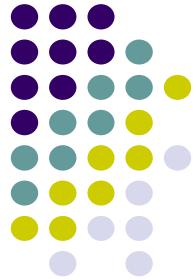
- *The doctor went into school at one point to tell them I was ill with Grave's [disease]. My hair was falling out and they let me wear a hat but then there was this one teacher who made me take it off every time in front of the whole class to make sure I still needed to wear it. **Sam, 16.***
- *For me it wasn't a case of not wanting to go to school, it was a case of being too scared to go to school, because of the bullying... I got beat up a lot... I did actually want to go in and learn, that is what stressed me out so much, because I really wanted an education, but I just couldn't. **Cara, 15.***
- *Not being able to understand all the teachers that was my main thing, the reason I skived. If I'd been able to stop doing some subjects I just didn't get, I think it would have been better. **Kerry, 16.***



## Positive experiences of school

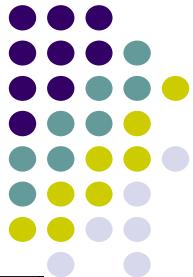
- *He was just fantastic... I wanted to work, you know if you've got a good teacher you'll work won't you? You know if your teachers are nice to you and talk to you as if you're an adult instead of a child, you do feel like you want to learn and that's why I loved maths. **Maria, 18.***

# Educational experiences during pregnancy



- 50% received a good response to the news
  - Good attendance record, enjoyed school pre-pregnancy & attending well at disclosure.
- Disengaged from informing school, poor attendance record, disliked school pre-pregnancy & disengaged at point of disclosure
  - 0% positive response

# Educational location during pregnancy

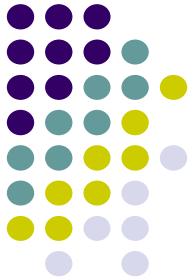


<b>Location during pregnancy</b>	<b>Availability of location type in LEA</b>	<b>No. of Young Women</b>
Mainstream school or school & home tuition for maternity only	All LEAs	32
Home tuition (majority of pregnancy)	5 LEAs	9
Specialist unit for pregnant young women and young mothers	4 LEAs	30
Education other (pregnancy specific)	2 LEAs	6
Education other (generic)	5 LEAs	11
Not receiving any education	Occurred in 5 LEAs	5
Total		93

# Reason for location during pregnancy

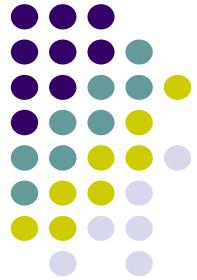


- DfES guidance (2001): a school cannot exclude a young woman on the basis of being pregnant.
- 19 were directly asked to leave, 4 were 'strongly encouraged' to leave.
  - damage to the school's reputation
  - school rules,
  - poor attendance or prior formal exclusion
  - 'health and safety'
    - *She (head teacher) said I shouldn't really be at school from about 5 months of pregnancy, in case I got knocked and it gave the baby brain damage or something. Louise, 15.*



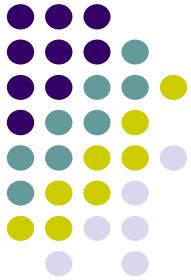
# Reason for location during pregnancy

- Decision influenced by dislike of school pre-pregnancy and/or how easy it was for them to manage both pregnancy and schoolwork in their original setting
  - Liked school = 1/2 remained at school
  - Disliked school = 1/3 remained in school (most common where no alternative existed).
- Change in location = escaping bullying, gain an education without being 'in school', feel physically safer, deal better with ill-health, or provide a more relaxed atmosphere



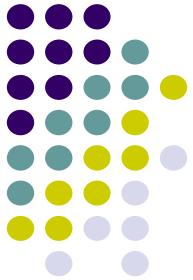
# Support during pregnancy

- Emotional support
- Practical support
- Work-related support
- Only 15 / 61 educated out of school had contact with their school



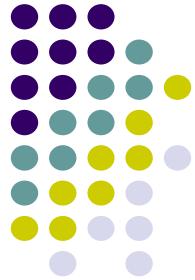
# Outcomes and achievements

- Attendance: good-excellent attendance rates almost doubled during pregnancy.
  - Most dramatic improvements – those in alternative locations, the majority of whom had poor pre-pregnancy attendance records.
- GCSEs: grade point range 4 – 61.
  - The average (mean) was 31, equivalent to 5 GCSEs passes at A-C
  - 27 pt av. in specialist units and alternatives: 33 pt av. in schools
- Increased interest in and/ or improved attitude towards education
  - 79 wished to continue their education into further/higher education



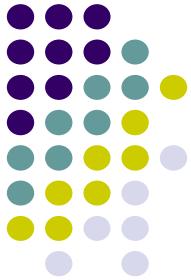
## ***Explanations the outcomes & achievements***

- Support provided during pregnancy (emotional, practical and work-related)
- Changed responsibilities & priorities
  - *Yes, it's so important and becoming a mum has made me wish I'd not skived off the way I did. I'm not skiving school now! I want to come and get some GCSEs and then get a job for him to be proud of me you know? Lucy, 15.*
- Improved perceptions of education and the future



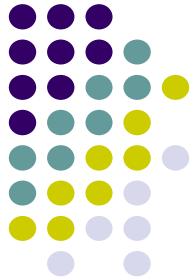
# Is pregnancy good for your education?

- For many, disengagement from school began early in secondary school
- Tackling early disengagement could impact on both Government teenage pregnancy targets
- Dislike of school = high risk of teenage motherhood
  - Increasing satisfaction with school = help to reduce unintended teenage pregnancy



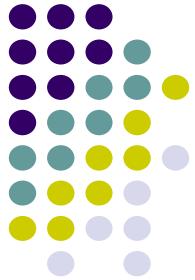
# Is pregnancy good for your education?

- *‘...earlier interventions to prevent children falling behind their peers – tackling potential problems before they have a long-term impact on a child’s education... more targeted approaches to tackle under-performance among particular groups of young people who are at greater risk of teenage pregnancy... To maximise the impact of schools’ attainment, behaviour and attendance strategies on teenage pregnancy rates, we will publish a short briefing for Local Authorities to send to all schools, making clear the strong association with low attainment and poor attendance, and highlighting additional risk factors for teenage pregnancy such as being emotionally withdrawn or showing poor social engagement’ (DfES 2006a: 22-23)*



# Is pregnancy good for your education?

- Disengaged doesn't equal disinterested
- Pregnancy = 'wake-up call'
- Alternative forms of education offered many a route back into education
- Changed view of education + reality of motherhood = important catalyst for change



# Young Motherhood & Social Inclusion

- Young motherhood doesn't automatically mean negative outcomes
- Positives of young motherhood - strong recurring theme of British qualitative research
- *“feel stronger, more competent, more connected to family and society and more responsible. Resilience in the face of constraints and stigma, based on a belief in the moral worth of being a mother, is one overriding theme” (Duncan 2007).*

# **Pregnancy's good for your education!: dislike of and disengagement from school, teenage pregnancy and the route to social inclusion**

---

Dr. Alison Hosie  
Research Consultant

[ali@alisonhosie.co.uk](mailto:ali@alisonhosie.co.uk)  
[www.alisonhosie.co.uk](http://www.alisonhosie.co.uk)

