

Journal of Adolescent Health & Welfare

VOLUME 4 NO 2 SUMMER 1991

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THE BRITISH "JOURNAL OF ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELFARE" is the journal
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CHARITY NO 296080

Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleague,

So much seems to have happened since the last issue that it is difficult to remember all the news. We had a very succesful 'official opening' at Youth Support House on 13th April.

The day started with a short celebratory service and house blessing led by Canon Leslie Virgo, which was based on the theme of St Francis so that the nursery children were able to join in with glove puppet animals and a lot of singing.

We were lucky to have some of our international colleagues with us - Prof Roger Tonkin head of adolescent health in Vancouver cut the ribbon and Prof Richard McKenzie from Los Angeles performed very important functions such as helping erect the bouncy castle - which teenagers of all ages thoroughly enjoyed!

Our work in the Soviet Union continues to develop - we now have three students placed at polytechnics in UK under a joint agreement between a soviet Regional Charity fund (to help gifted students) and Youth Support. Many Soviet students are looking for placements in the UK so if you have any such resource available, please let us know.

The main development has been the setting up of a centre for orphans, runaways and incest victims which we are working on with funding from the Lenin Children's fund. Anyone interested in our international work can visit Youth Support House and see our exhibition of work - please telephone to arrange a convenient time.

The theme of the October meeting will be The Care System - a very topical subject and I hope many of you will be able to attend.

Best wishes,

Dr Diana Birch
MBBS DCH MRCP MSc MFCH MD
Director "YOUTH SUPPORT".

Patrons: Dame Josephine Barnes; Sir Frank Mills.

CHARITY NO 296080

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE "YOUTH SUPPORT"
"FORUM ON ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELFARE"

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS AND SEND to:-
YOUTH SUPPORT 30 Crystal Palace Park Road SE26 6UG

Cheques payable to YOUTH SUPPORT

I would like to join the "FORUM ON ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELFARE" I enclose £20 registration fee which covers my first years membership (journal included in cost).

NAME POSITION.....

ADDRESS.....

.....
..... PHONE.....

WE ARE UPDATING OUR MAILING LIST - PLEASE COMPLETE FORM WITH YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS AND DETAILS IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE ON THE LIST - THANK YOU.

LEAVING CARE?
WORKING WITH THOSE LEAVING CARE?

We are starting a project for young people leaving care - social club one evening per week - advice - chance to talk to others in similar circumstances -
If you would be willing to help or interested in joining - please get in touch.

STOP PRESS !!!

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE LESSONS - starting
at Youth Support House in September
- Any level - apply now!

Youth Support House

YOUTH SUPPORT PROGRAMME OF TRAINING SESSIONS AUTUMN 1991

Youth Support Workshops - Autumn Term 1991

The following programme of workshops are held at Youth Support House, 13 Crescent Road, Beckenham. All run from 2.30 to 4.30pm on Wednesday afternoons. Cost £20 per workshop or £60 for course of four.

Series 1 - suitable for any professional working with young people.

- 18th September 1991 "Teenage Pregnancy"
- 2nd October 1991 "teenage belief systems - that old black magic"
- 16th October 1991 Self Esteem in Adolescence
- 30th October 1991 Finding the 'true self' in adolescence - the dilemma for teenagers with a disability.

Series 2 -

We are planning a series of training workshops suitable for nursery workers and those working with young children. These will cover aspects of child development, vision, hearing and psychological development.

- 25th September 1991 - General child development - 0-2years
- 9th October 1991 - General child development 2 - 2 years +
- 23 October 1991 - Special senses - vision and hearing
- 6th November 1991 - Psychology and emotional development.

Teachers - Do you have difficulty relating to some of your pupils? Do you find talking about sexual issues or abuse emotionally taxing? We are running professional support groups to confront some of these difficult issues - Tuesday afternoons from 17th September 1991. Fee £15 per session or £10 if attending three or more sessions. Dates 17, 24 sept; 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 oct; 5 nov.

For all courses please apply to: Youth Support House
13 Crescent Road
Beckenham
Kent BR3 2NF
Telephone: 081 650 6296

Cheques made payable to: Youth Support
Charity No. 296080

Firm bookings with remittance.

Name Tel No

Address

Designation

Booking For

MEETINGS MEETINGS MEETINGS MEETINGS MEETINGS

At the Royal Society of Medicine
1 Wimpole Street London WC1

on Thursday 17th October 1991 6pm-9pm

"The care system - does it work for teenagers?"

The current media attention has been on the care system, residential placements and 'pin down'. The newspapers have been full of criticism of carers. There has been condemnation of certain practices and a call for more qualified staff in residential units. At the same time there has been no support for staff working in such difficult situations and no indication as to where funding will come from to improve staffing levels and conditions. Youth Support had planned the 1991 October meeting to cover the theme of teenagers in care and leaving care - this has now become of great topical interest.

Our speakers are from the charitable and statutory sectors and should provide a superb forum for discussion of our dilemmas. We are also hoping that Mrs Virginia Bottomley may be able to participate. At Youth Support House we have set up a model unit based on the principles now expounded by the government. Mrs Bottomley has called for well qualified staff and a professional attitude to care. This we have achieved - with highly qualified medical, nursing and psychotherapy staff, experienced teachers and regular staff in service training. But we have achieved this at high cost - and even as a charity we must make ends meet - How? when social services budgets have been cut - what is the point of an excellent service which nobody can afford?

I would like to attend the Youth Support Forum meeting on 17th October.

I am a forum member and will bring guests (free to members).

I would like to join the forum and enclose annual fee of £20 which entitles me to free entry to the meeting. I will bring guests.

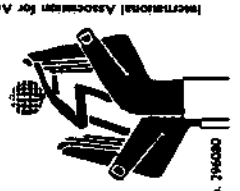
I am not a member. I enclose £10 per person total

Cheques payable to YOUTH SUPPORT

Name tel no

Address

Designation



The following talk featured at our October meeting 1990.

The Arbour Project - Liverpool
Yvonne Ford - Jan Abbey

"Teenage Pregnancy - The experience in Liverpool"

The Arbour was established 12 years ago in response to ideas regarding prevention of pregnancies. There are widely varying rates of teenage pregnancy even in developing countries and the Alan Guttmacher institute figures showed that countries with good sex education and access to contraception have low rates of pregnancy. The Netherlands have a particularly good record, better even than some Scandinavian countries with liberal attitudes to sex.

The Arbour is situated in inner city Liverpool, near Liverpool football ground. We work with any pregnant girl who attends school in the city. There are on average 50 referrals per year. Facilities are poor. There is little support throughout the country -- only isolated pockets of help working in different ways.

The Arbour is a partnership between the education department, social services and health. Funding comes from social services who provide the salary of a nursery nurse., Education, who fund the teacher (Jan) and books and equipment, the health visitor also gives some hours.

Anyone who is pregnant at school can be referred, there is an open system, via phone contact, health visitors, doctors, schools, social workers.

Yvonne is the first contact, she visits the family and the girl and offers support. There is not a good service as regards contraception or antenatal care, services are not geared to girls needs. Services are not offered at a level that girls find acceptable, they are not very welcoming. There should be some separate services for young girls -

at the moment it is difficult for them to blend in.

After the first visit home, the girl may visit the centre. Here work is done as a team and roles are shared and exchanged as necessary. The girls also give each other a lot of support and this is important.

Family visits vary - for some families it is the norm for girls to get pregnant while at school. while others are unable to cope and the turmoil drives some girls into care - most are distressed but give support.

One of the problems is that girls start periods earlier. 12 years is the UK average, but the average age to have babies is now 27 years, the reasons being a wish to finish education to establish a identity and have something to offer a child. . Girls are starting to have sex at an earlier age and unless there are good contraceptive services, they will get pregnant. however here we have a shortage. GP guide-lines are not clear, girls are not sure they can get contraception, often contraceptive services are too 'clinical' and linked with the mechanics of sex - relationships are not discussed. Those who continue with their pregnancy have further problems with regard to education.

Liverpool education department published a booklet for head teachers. It encouraged schools to keep girls at school as long as possible, however at Arbour schoolgirls attend who have been turned away from school when their pregnancies have been revealed. Girls can attend on four mornings per week or on a one day drop in basis. They are mainly fifth year pupils. The home teacher can provide one or two hours per week At Arbour 6 to 7 girls usually attend each year. They may be pregnant, or newly delivered. The aim is to help girls to gain their full potential. - academic subjects, parentcraft, the mother baby relationship, practical issues are covered. This two hour session

basis is better than home teaching but they have to be motivated to attend. Classes usually start at 10.30 am and a nursery nurse minds the babies while the girls are in classes. Most girls have been poor attenders at school - they take city and Guild - sometimes short courses of 6-8 weeks so some of the

curriculum has to be modified. Girls get letters of credit validated by the northern examining board. Teaching is centred on the practical issues and both the nursery nurse and health visitor are involved in demonstrations. Girls attend clinic for immunisations, there is also an activity session - for instance swimming with or without the children.

New ! Youth Support Publication -

Retracing The Echoes

The proceeds of sales of this volume will go towards our work with deprived children and teenagers in the Soviet Union -

"Retracing the Echoes"

Lilly was a principal dancer with Isadora Duncan in her Russian school. She grew up in the Soviet Union in the troubled years after the Revolution. Diana grew up in London of Italian background and is a doctor working with deprived children in many parts of the world.

As their paths cross in London, Russia and Spain we retrace the echoes of their childhoods, divergent yet resonant and through their stories we explore the emotional traumas of youth and the pains of growing up.

Whatever our ages, we are all still children inside, we can all still feel childhood pain and we can empathise with those troubled children in our society. - Yes, we can all do that - but some of us are more detached from

that experience, more shut off from our children than others. Some of us cannot or will not hear the childhood voice within.

These pages are a plea to us all to listen to that child and to value the child in each and every one of us....

This story is about some special children who lived through the Revolution and grew up as their new society was simultaneously developing and finding it's way. But in truth we are all special children and we are all still seeking a way....

* * * * *

**Copies available from Youth Support House
13 Crescent Road BR3 2NF
Price £3.95 per copy - send £4 to include p&P.**

Please send copies of "Retracing the Echoes"
I enclose in payment.

Name.....
Address..... Tel no.....
.....
.....

The following article appeared in Novum magazine 1991

Teenage Pregnancy - A Problem for the Nineties?

Dr Diana Birch

Director Youth Support

School age pregnancy has been and will remain a controversial subject. I met my first pregnant schoolgirl patient twenty years ago and I am still amazed at the varying responses I get from people when I tell them of the work I do. They vary from the outraged 'It shouldn't be allowed' to a shrug of the shoulders and a 'So what, Isn't that natural in some families?'

So what was all the fuss about?

Are there really problems associated with early teenage pregnancy or is this just a facet of human behaviour which provides a nice little niche for research workers to get their teeth into in preparing their theses?.

Certainly this last way of regarding the situation must spring to mind when one considers the vast volume of papers produced in the United States. Yes, certainly teenage pregnancy is very prevalent in the USA - but can this justify the sheer volume of research re-researching and re-re-researching the same topics - not to mention the computer data bases filled with every conceivable piece of information down to what breakfast cereal teenage mothers prefer for breakfast. Sometimes I think that we have lost the ability to see the human dilemma through a barrage of questionnaires - evaluated and cross referenced, of course.

Have we lost our ability to see the wood for the trees?

So, to return to my question - Have the differences between teenage and older mothers been overstated, and the consequences been overrated. Could we say that early childbearing is merely a

solution type response to a social situation?

Certainly there is a certain type of girl for whom pregnancy is not a problem but a solution to her problems, or so it may seem initially - a fulfillment, something she can do right, someone that is wholly hers and who will love her - a boost to her self esteem. However, looking at even one case history should provide ample evidence that this is an erroneous view - the solution is a false solution.

Teenage pregnancy caught the media attention with the publishing of the Guttmacher report '11 million teenagers. What can be done about the epidemic of adolescent pregnancy in the US?' (Alan Guttmacher Institute 1976). This was the time of the 'baby boom' in the USA and coincided with our peak teenage fertility in England and Wales. At the time it was thought that the problem would fade away with the end of the baby boom. However, the arrival in 1981 of the second report 'The problem which that has not gone away' - proved that it did not!

Twenty years on, the situation in the United States was most ably stated by Frank Furstenberg in a presentation to the 1991 Society of Adolescent Medicine conference in Denver - 'Reconsidering the costs of teenage childbearing'. The premise of his lecture was to confound the theorists who argue that teenage pregnancy is no more than having a child at an early age and carries no damaging sequelae and to show that there are no advantages to girls or to society in bearing children while still of school age.

So does it matter if girls have their children at a very young age? How do we evaluate the consequences? Perhaps the time honoured tradition of looking at outcomes and control groups is not applicable and moreover confusing. The population of schoolgirl mothers is not homogeneous, there are ethnic and social divisions,

moreover cross cultural groups are not comparable - the social pattern in Britain for instance is not analogous with that in the United States or other parts of Europe. Who does one choose as a control group? Different groups are relevant depending on the parameter being researched. There are pitfalls to consider at each level.

Let us consider a few pertinent facts - illegitimate births increased in older women in the eighties and white girls started behaving more like black girls (Birch 1986). Hence longitudinal studies or comparisons between older mothers and teenagers or across racial groups ran into problems with shifting baselines.

Should we be controlling for socioeconomic groups in looking at consequences? School age pregnancy is not a random occurrence but is associated with certain demographic variables. There is a definite increase in low socioeconomic groups (Birch 1987, 1989), hence can we say that there is an obviously poor outcome? There are those who argue that since early pregnancy occurs in low socioeconomic level families, then the poverty seen in such groups is not as a consequence of the early reproductive cycle but is inherent in their backgrounds. Such a proposition was put forward by Geronimus and Camus in their study of sibling comparisons.

They showed that teenage mothers financially did about as well, or as poorly, as their sisters who did not have children at a young age. There was only a modest income difference. However, what has been missed in this evaluation is the price which a family and thus other siblings, has to pay when one member of this family has a baby at a very early age.

Siblings are quite obviously affected when their sisters become pregnant. Sisters do of course, often follow the pattern and indulge in early sex or become young mothers themselves. Even if

they do not, the pregnancy of a sister has profound implications. Family unrest, rows and upheavals may occur, the pregnant girl inevitably becomes the centre of attraction be it in a negative or positive manner. A sister, or brother may be forced to give up a bedroom or other living space for the new arrival and may be roped into sharing child care. Overcrowding, noise and the time devoted to looking after a baby all impinge on the siblings personal space and study time, hence leading to lowered expectations in education and employment and perhaps an urge to leave home sooner.

The family as a whole will be placed under financial strain by a new baby and thus all members will feel the effect of a school age pregnancy. Hence the cost to the family of origin must be considered not only on a financial level, but also on an emotional and practical level. Patterns of family structure, nest leaving and relationships are affected not only for the pregnant member, but for the family as a whole.

The ramifications of the consequences of early childbearing are thus very wide and hence difficult to either demonstrate or exclude in research protocol.

Several researchers have shown that later childbirth leads to increased marriage rates, better education prospects and higher financial status but are there any benefits of early childbearing? It has been suggested that bearing children at a young age may be beneficial - there is no evidence for this. Several studies have shown that with good antenatal care there are no increased risks to the mother in early childbirth, but certainly there are no advantages. However the proviso of 'good antenatal care' is often unfulfilled and there are attendant factors such as poor diet, poverty and illegitimacy which are indicators of unfavourable outcome.

Moreover it is generally recognised that the baby is at increased risk of prematurity, low birth weight and possibly congenital malformation and this risk becomes significantly higher in repeat pregnancies.

Perhaps there may be some advantage in having a mother who is young, nearer to the age of the baby and thus able to communicate better? It would seem not - the young mother is in many ways still a child herself, is often emotionally very needy having missed out on love and attention herself in early childhood and hence is unable to give to her child that which she lacks herself. It is difficult for such girls to put their child's needs before their own or even to acknowledge their babies emotional needs. And what of the young father? These boys are usually a little older than their partners and they often do try to stay in contact and emotionally support the young mother. However very few eventually live together and although 45% are still in touch by the child's second birthday, a greater proportion lose contact as the years go by. (75% at birth; 65% at 6 weeks; 55% at 6 months; 50% at one year; 45% at two years - Birch 1986, 1987) Hence young fathers gradually fade out of children's lives.

Are there advantages in being brought up in an extended family and thus does the child of a teenager benefit from the presence of grandparents? Research in the US has shown that there is no advantage in a socially extended carers system and moreover that the longer they stay in such a situation, the worse the outcome. Girls do not find that they get much support from younger members of the family either, little sisters soon tire of playing with the doll and want to get on with their own lives. Most children and their young mothers move out after three to four years in any event (Furstenberg 1991). Hence there are

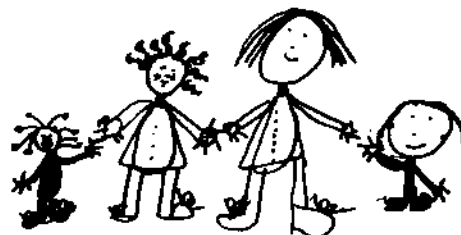
problems both to the family and the teenage mother and her child inherent in their living together.

Weighing up the benefits and difficulties of early childbirth one can say that it is certainly an area fraught with difficulty. In our society we are not geared towards early pregnancy and hence we are unable to provide the support network required to help young mothers. In addition few girls are prepared for early childbearing and looking back girls do regret their early pregnancies - they say such things as -

'Well, I do love my baby and I wouldn't lose him for the world, but I wish I had been older' or

'I suppose I'll be OK, but who would marry me now? How can I find a decent bloke if I've already got someone else's baby?'

'I've grown up seriously since I had her. I can't believe some of the things I used to get up to I only wish I had grown up before...'



"Are You My Sister, Mummy?" reports the findings of over ten years work with more than 150 very young girls, their boyfriends, families and children, telling their poignant stories in a compassionate and empathetic manner.

✂-----

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_____ Copies

"ARE YOU MY SISTER, MUMMY" @£10 = £ _____