Identification of Good Practice in Enhanced Housing Support for Teenage Parents

A report by the Foyer Federation

Contents

Background to the report

The Foyer Federation was commissioned by the Department for Education to identify and support good practice in enhanced housing support for teenage parents across four areas of provision:

▶ In the Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilots[1], which were active in seven local authorities across England from 2009-2011. The Foyer Federation has been on the advisory group for the pilots since their inception and took part in the preparatory work;

▶ In the UK Foyer network, which as of January 2011 accommodated 155 teenage mothers and around 100 teenage fathers – 14 Foyers have dedicated teenage parent accommodation, and 45 report doing some work with teenage parents;

▶ In the provision of floating support for teenage parents;

▶ In the provision of supported lodgings for teenage parents.

It is envisaged that the good practice identified by the Foyer Federation through the pilots will inform the future development of services for teenage mothers, children and partners. Whilst drawing on examples identified through the Foyer network, the Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilots and elsewhere, the practice it identifies is tenure-neutral.

The work undertaken by the Foyer Federation focused on four themes in particular:

▶ Support for leadership development in the pilots and identification of the key leadership qualities that result in success;

▶ Analysis of floating support models, and how the elements of best practice identified can be embedded in them;

▶ Identification of examples of where supported lodgings are being used as a solution for teenage parents;

▶ The kinds and levels of conditionality that are appropriate for this vulnerable group.

Activities carried out by the Foyer Federation complement and work alongside the independent evaluation of the Child Poverty Pilot being conducted by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York.

The good practice identified in the course of this research does not claim to be exhaustive, and practice identified through other means as leading to good outcomes for teenage parents should be regarded as equally valid.

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[1] The Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilots are part of a programme of Child Poverty Pilots. The pilots represent a range of innovative policy interventions, with each pilot testing a different approach to tackling child poverty.

Note on methodology

The Foyer Federation has, since 1998, developed and piloted accreditation mechanisms that have aimed to capture the impact of the work that Foyers do, identifying good practice in service delivery to young people in the process. This report is informed by two of these accreditation models, the Foyer Status Mark and the Transformational Innovation Mark.

Foyer Status Mark

The Foyer Status Mark (FSM) quality assures 'Foyerness' as a process of transitional support and holistic development, expressed through different service models with a shared sense of identity and impact. The FSM can be used by any organisation that applies a Foyer-like process to achieve thriving outcomes for young people aged between 14 and 30.

A service is recognised as a Foyer by applying and benchmarking it against the 'Three Tests of Foyerness'. These define the **focus**, the **approach**, and the **relationship** that underpin the Foyer process. The tests allow flexibility in how a service shapes and delivers its offer according to local need while, at the same time, emphasising the distinct values and ethos that has been at the heart of the Foyer Accreditation Scheme since 1998. Services applying a Foyer-like focus, approach and relationship, who do not wish to be formally recognised as a Foyer, can still use the FSM to assess and benchmark the strength of their service offer.

Transformational Innovation Mark

The Transformational Innovation Mark (TIM) has been designed to recognise transformational practice that enables young people to achieve a level of independence where they are 'thriving', rather than merely 'surviving'. It is a means of evaluating how far a service has reached a transformational level, and looks at three areas of practice: **impact**, **inclusion** and **innovation**.

For this report, practitioners in Foyers, the pilot sites, supported lodgings and floating support services, were asked to complete a self-assessment survey that contained questions from the accreditation models above that were most appropriate to the setting. Elements of good practice are taken from these survey responses, grouped by emerging themes where appropriate. Case study material and quotes from individual survey responses, including from the pilot sites, is included where this is instructive.

Scope and range of provision covered by the research

The range of providers that returned the survey span from a supported lodgings provider with only one place for teenage parents, to a county council providing support to over 300 teenage parents. The practice surveyed is hence wide-ranging and diverse. It is important, therefore, to bear in mind the scale of the provision when discussing good practice elements. Where the scale of provision is a key factor of the practice under discussion, then, the size of the provider is clearly indicated in the text.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which categories of support provision they offered for teenage parents: whether accommodation-based, floating support, supported lodgings, or other forms of enhanced housing support. Responses were received from:

▶ Arena Options, Wirral and Merseyside

▶ Barking Foyer, Barking

▶ Blackburn with Darwen Foyer

▶ Bromford Housing Group, West Midlands

▶ Edmonds Court Foyer, Birmingham

▶ Open Door Housing Scheme (supported lodgings), Cornwall

▶ Redbridge Foyer

▶ Salford Foyer

▶ Sheffield Foyer

▶ Stonham Supported Lodgings Scheme, Hampshire

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Blackburn with Darwen

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Brighton and Hove

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Nottingham

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Somerset

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Wandsworth

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, Worcestershire

▶ Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, York

Practice elements

Floating support

Responses from floating support providers focused on three main themes: relationships with other services (both on the part of the provider and of the service user); the importance of user engagement and involvement; and the importance of having well-trained staff with the right competencies. The good practice elements identified will therefore be organised under these three themes.

1. Relationships with other services

All respondents to the surveys mentioned that one of the primary purposes of floating support is to ensure that the service user is in touch and engaging with all the other services from which they could obtain support. Aside from the provision of individual support with budgeting and lifeskills, all floating support providers mentioned that engagement with external agencies is a key feature of the support offered.

External agencies mentioned frequently are Sure Start/ Children's Centres, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, maternity and sexual health services, and education, employment and training providers. One provider states "We know that typically young parents find it hard to access services aimed at the wider community and [the Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot] has enabled them to access these services with additional support". Use of the Common Assessment Framework for arranging support packages is mentioned by a number of providers.

One key outcome of the engagement with wider services for the young person is clearly that they gain access to the full range of services from which they may benefit. Another, and in the view of the providers equally important outcome is the role that these services play in tackling isolation, and enabling teenage parents to develop an informal support network through other parents that they meet.

It is therefore important that the service itself invests in building relationships with these external services. It is crucial to the success of any service, whatever its scale, that it is seen as effective, professional and trustworthy.

Promotion of the service through collecting case studies, events and a newsletter was identified by a number of providers as a way of reaching other professionals who are potential partners or referral agents. One provider suggests that this can help when difficulties between individual service users and other external services arise, since there is already a relationship that can be built on.

2. Engaging and involving young people

The crucial aspect of the support offered to the young person, is that the content of the service offer should be right for each individual service user. This means tailoring the support offered to meet the needs of each individual and to involve them in deciding the scope and range of support they require. Individual service users must feel that the support offered is relevant to their lives.

One provider has mentioned that a crucial aspect of the service they offer is that it is, in the first instance, 'outreach' or floating support. Not requiring the young person to attend a particular venue is seen as a key feature in the success of the service. Other providers have suggested that it is important to meet the young person where they feel most comfortable, be that in their home, or at a local cafe. The same provider also offers support visits at evenings and weekends to give as much flexibility as possible. Another service ensures that the dates and times of visits are determined by the young person not by the support worker.

Providers felt that all these factors helped to minimise dropped or missed visits. All respondents also mentioned the importance of using communication channels that the young person feels comfortable with, including the use of text messaging to confirm appointments and to remind service users shortly before scheduled visits.

In the event that a service user fails to engage completely, one provider working with around ten teenage parents stresses the importance of a 'case closure discussion,' where the relevant support worker(s) outline all the support that has been offered and review how things could have been done differently, or be done differently in future. This helps with continuous service improvement and workforce development.

A number of providers, both large and small, mention the

importance of the recognition of achievements of teenage parents as they make changes in their own lives and help their children to reach significant milestones. This can range from large graduation ceremonies for larger services, to providing in-house or formal accreditation for the achievement of learning programmes, to simple praise and encouragement from support staff. In cases where service users are isolated from their families and possibly from other young people in the same situation, this is especially important as this may be the only source of such recognition.

Finally, a number of providers mentioned the value of engaging current and former service users in the recruitment of staff and in encouraging them to fulfil a role as an ambassador for the service. This has benefits for the perception of the service by external agencies, and importantly also empowers the service users and enables them to reflect on their own achievements.

3. Well-trained and competent staff

Since in the context of floating support, staff are not on hand at all times of the day and night to offer advice and guidance, a number of providers emphasised the preventative aspect of the service offer. One of its key functions is to prevent things from going wrong for the service user, and to pre-empt and find solutions for emerging difficulties. For this reason, one provider mentions the importance of comprehensive information gathering from the outset of the relationship with the young person.

In order for this to happen successfully, staff should have some expertise in the issues that affect teenage parents, such as housing, benefits, health and well-being and engagement with employment and training opportunities. Staff knowledge should be kept up to date with regularly refreshed training and development. Indeed, one pilot mentions that the presence of teenage parenthood expertise in settings where none have been present before, has had real benefits in terms of raising the profile of this vulnerable group, in turn enabling more teenage parents to gain access to services which historically they have struggled to use.

Another key aspect of their service which many providers pointed out, was the value of the informal relationships developed between service users and staff. It is crucial in this

context therefore, that staff engaged in supporting teenage parents should have the right competencies to carry out this informal 'role-model' aspect of their position. As one provider expresses, "it is [the] relationship that ensures that they attend the group work on offer and attend the one-to-one meetings." A number of providers report that support staff are asked to provide information and guidance on issues that fall outside their immediate general remit, and therefore it is important that staff are equipped to deal with this properly and sensitively.

One provider lists the combinations of practice activities and actions that they undertake as an organisation to ensure the skills of their staff are kept up to date thus: "Training passports that clearly set out what knowledge and skills a staff member must possess or have undertaken to be effective in their practice. We monitor progress through supervision and dip-sampling case work files, and annual appraisals identify learning needs and skills or areas of expertise. In addition we have weekly staff update meetings and twice daily handovers, and all staff attend the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) training".

The case study from the Blackburn with Darwen Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot on the next page demonstrates that with the right offer in place, a family including teenage parents can engage with the structured support on offer and progression into learning and work for teenage parents can be achieved.

Case study: Blackburn with Darwen teenage parent housing support

When the Blackburn with Darwen project commenced there was a shortage of supported accommodation for young couples who were pregnant or had dependent children. Providers were reluctant to accommodate such couples because their relationships were often extremely volatile and their instability could be exacerbated by having other single young people living in close proximity.

This lack of accommodation for couples resulted in young parents being forced to live apart and young fathers having very little chance to contribute to the early part of their children's lives.

At that time, teenage parents in need of accommodation were assessed by the Housing Department in the Town Hall. The local authority consulted with young people who said that they would prefer to access services in a more 'young person-friendly' environment.

This pilot meshes a service specifically developed for teenage parents with a newly developed Young People's Housing team, co-located with Nightsafe, the local charity for homeless young people. Nightsafe offers an assessment of the housing and support needs of the young people and their child, as a couple and as a family.

The local authority has worked with the Amber Foundation to develop a tenancy-skills training course known as the 'Passport to Housing'. The pilot reports that young people who successfully complete this training are helped to secure independent housing, since landlords are more likely to be convinced that they will make responsible tenants if they have completed the course.

A major development in the borough was the setting up of the Teenage Parents' Information Sharing group, at which the dedicated teenage parent midwife provided health, housing and Connexions' staff with information about new teenage pregnancies, thus allowing planned and coordinated services to be put in place as necessary.

One couple, Jayne, 18, and her partner Simon 19, presented to the Young People's Housing team in February 2010.
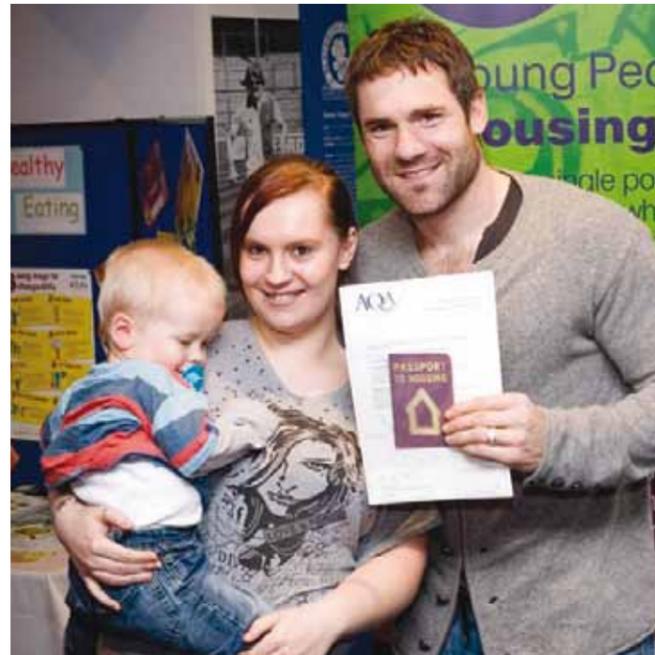
Young people from Blackburn with Darwen Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot receiving their Passport to Housing

They were about to be evicted from Simon's parents' home and Jayne was seven months pregnant with her first child. The Young People's Housing adviser referred the couple to the Teenage Parent Team for support.

❝ **This is my story: quite recently I was living with my father and his wife and my pregnant girlfriend was living there with us. We didn't really get on with my father's wife – my dad kind of took her side in all arguments, so we had no choice but to get out of there… We were stuck, we didn't know what we were going to do and we were terrified knowing that we had a baby on the way. Then our health visitor referred us to the Young People's Housing team, we went down, had a word, and then before we knew it everything got going.** ❞

Simon

Simon was determined to provide for his family. Their support officer enrolled him and Jayne on the Passport to Housing course delivered by the Teenage Parent Team. The training would assist the couple to move towards independent living and act as a first step back into learning.

❝ **They got us referred to a temporary place called the Hollins Street Project. Now we're living in an independent flat there, but we also get all the support we need and things are looking brilliant for me and my girlfriend and our baby when it arrives. The support will last for another six months after we move into our own property, they will continue to help us with budgeting and bills and parenting skills and anything else we really need help with.** ❞

Simon

In April 2010, Jayne gave birth to a healthy boy. Jayne and Simon were happy to continue living in supported accommodation and receive assistance from their support officer, who helped with the practicalities of keeping their accommodation and attended appointments with the couple.

Jayne and Simon moved into their own housing association property in September 2010. They say that without the support from the Teenage Parent Team they would not have known what to do. Support from the Teenage Parent Team continued until January 2011, when it was felt that Jayne and Simon were able to manage independently.

Supported lodgings

Those providers that returned information about their supported lodging schemes provided limited information on good practice. It is clear that schemes that responded to the survey are very new and have had little time to embed and learn from their practice. Provided below are some suggested elements of supported lodgings practice that do, however, seem significant.

It is apparent that supported lodging schemes are, by their very nature, rooted in the communities of the teenage parents they support. It is therefore easier to promote engagement with the local community through use of local services as a result.

Many providers of supported lodgings stated that there was no institutional or statutory barrier to accommodating teenage parents in their schemes, but that whether or not they were able to do so was obviously contingent on finding and recruiting hosts that were willing and able to do so. No provider of supported lodgings reported that they had any additional outcome measures or assessment models over and above any outcome returns that they would complete as a matter of course.

One provider of supported lodgings for teenage parents had involved service users in recruiting hosts.

It is clear that the informal nature of the support offered via this route is valuable for some teenage parents: "by providing a non-intrusive positive role-model and a listening ear that increases self-esteem and the belief that she can cope." It may not, however, be an appropriate route for teenage parents with higher needs. Indeed, one provider stated that only in circumstances where there were no child protection concerns would supported lodgings be considered an appropriate option.

Conditionality

The dictionary defines 'conditionality' as 'being subject to, implying, or dependent upon, a condition'. In housing the term refers to a tenancy that is, in some way, dependent upon the actions or behaviour of the tenant. In 2008 the Foyer Federation published its 'ten principles of conditionality', as part of a review conducted by Communities and Local Government of incentives and obligations in social housing tenancies. The 'ten principles' are as follows:

Conditionality should be:

1. **Quality** assured;

2. **Holistic** in a way which goes beyond education, employment and housing, into skills, resources, and other opportunities (engagement and influence);

3. Able to balance the **legal** notion of tenure with the **psychological** contract of engagement;

4. **Expressed as a 'deal'** and an exchange, not an imposition;

5. **Progressive and aspirational**, both to follow the transitional needs of the individual to navigate their future life, as well as supporting the aspirations of the individual to want a better and different deal beyond the one they might first negotiate when entering the service;

6. **Communal**, to reflect the role of the individual as a member of a balanced community that fosters the values of interdependence, equality and inclusion;

7. **Flexible enough to navigate barriers** to engagement, for example the 16 hour rule, housing benefit limitations, etc;

8. **Shaped and personalised** by the young person, with the support of the Foyer or 'trusted adult' service, as part of a process to develop the skills and capabilities required to define a future 'social contract';

9. **A balance of rights and responsibilities** on both sides, with a role for extended families, commissioners, policy makers, employers and the local community to be part of the deal;

10. **Conditional in terms of 'something for something'** rather than the threat of taking something away – it's about making a decent offer, or 'getting the carrot right instead of using a stick'.

Responses from Foyers to the questions asked on this theme, tended to be more explicit about the conditionality arrangement that exists between teenage parent residents in Foyers and the support service they receive from the Foyer. Only a handful of other responses acknowledged any conditionality at all in the relationship with the service user. Whilst it is apparent that Foyers have more developed conditionality arrangements, it is likely that many of the agreements, contracts, charters and protocols referred to by Foyers also exist in other settings: it is simply that these are not recognised or acknowledged as conditionality arrangements.

This section will examine how conditionality arrangements are made, and the key success factors that make them work well.

When asked what kind of compact or agreement exists between the young person and the service, most responses referred to some kind of tenancy agreement, be it a licence or an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. In addition, however, Foyers referred to a charter that sets out what the teenage parent can expect of the service, as well as expectations on the young person in terms of engagement with the Foyer learning programme. No sanctions are attached to this charter, and Foyers are keen to stress that it is incumbent on their service to make it relevant and attractive to the young person and hence minimise disengagement. One Foyer lists its compact as going beyond what the Foyer has to provide statutorily, existing in all of the following: "a licence agreement, support charter, service standards, tenancy agreement, a communal living code and a warning system".

The conditional relationship between the service and the teenage parent is, as discussed in the 'ten principles' previously, expressed in Foyers as a 'deal' between each party: that is to say, there is equal emphasis on the requirement on the service to provide support of quality and value as there is on the teenage parent to engage with that support. A number of Foyers have a young person or group of young people responsible for monitoring the service quality alongside the manager(s) of the organisation.

Both Foyers and other providers (especially those providing supported lodgings), emphasised that a key element of the conditional arrangement is the emphasis on the service as a temporary or transitional arrangement, with a view to sustaining an independent tenancy in the future. This is still important in a floating support setting but might be applied differently as support can be withdrawn in stages, with a greater emphasis on rewards and less on sanctions.

In a study conducted in May 2008 of Foyers that provided accommodation and support to teenage parents, the Foyer Federation concluded that, "there is no correlation between the kind of tenancy offered and the support package that is in place", that is to say, that conditionality arrangements do not relate solely to the type of tenure (licence or Assured Shorthold Tenancy) under which accommodation is offered.

Providers that responded to the survey and acknowledged that there is a conditional element to their service, stressed that the conditional arrangement can only work where the service that is provided is both holistic and individually tailored.

A number of providers emphasised an empowering approach to support planning: "working with the resident to lead in their own support with the worker acting as a facilitator. A positive approach to risk management – working with the resident to identify risk effectively, avoid inappropriate risk taking, and manage risks where needed – ensuring that residents are supported to overcome hurdles to their development rather than the resident 'giving up' because it may be too difficult or risky." One Foyer allows residents to change their key worker if the relationship between them and the young person is deemed by the young person not to be working.

The promotion of a positive environment is essential to making the conditional relationship function well. Providers achieve this in a variety of ways. All providers, Foyers and others, involved service users in some way in decision making and service development apparatus. One provider ensures that there is always communal space available that is decorated by the young people themselves. The same provider hosts "reparative style activities when things go wrong", ensuring that a culture of community is always promoted. Also, providers are always keen to recognise achievement – two providers mention a 'complaints, compliments and comments' or 'you said we did' procedure, that enables the service to give feedback to the resident group as a whole and to check that a positive environment is being maintained.

The three case studies presented in this section demonstrate different aspects of conditionality. The case study from Brighton and Hove Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot, is a very good illustration of how viewing the service as a 'deal' between the service and the young person can have a profound impact on the attitudes and motivations of service users, especially in relation to child protection issues. The case study from Sheffield Foyer provides a detailed account of how conditionality for teenage parents works in their setting. The case study from Bromford Housing Group in the West Midlands discusses the relationship between conditionality and the tenancy agreement.

Case study: Conditionality for teenage parents at Brighton and Hove housing support

This pilot provides supported accommodation, on-site learning and life coaching for teenage mothers, their partners and children.

In Brighton, the number of teenage parents has been declining since 1998. However, although there are fewer teenage parents many of them have multiple and complex needs, with a significant proportion involved with children's social care. Previously there was no accommodation with high-level support available to meet the needs of these young parents.

To ensure that staff could be based on site to provide high-level support, one of the flats at an existing low-support project was taken out of use and turned into a space for them to provide intensive support and learning opportunities to groups of young parents. The project accommodates 16 young parents and their children (including five couples). They have all been engaged in accredited learning (each passing the equivalent of two GCSEs in the first year) and sustained their tenancies. One young parent has found employment and two families have moved into independent accommodation.

Information sharing was initially an issue because of training needs around confidentiality and what information could be shared. Within children's services in Brighton and Hove, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used with families that are working with more than one agency, and the project agreed that they would undertake CAF assessments with the young parents, to enable more joined up working and a consensual framework for information sharing.

Engaging the client group with high-level support has been one of the challenges that this pilot has set out to overcome. For example, young people who have never had any kind of psychological interventions have sometimes been reluctant to engage with the process, particularly when issues with their own childhoods have emerged. A life coach service attached to the pilot helps young parents improve relationships with partners, ex-partners and families and enhance engagement with learning opportunities and employment. The project key workers and life coaches have worked extremely well with health and social care teams to prevent escalation of issues, to improve parenting and to enable young parents, such as R, to engage with these statutory agencies successfully.

For example, R and her son moved into one of ten units at the pilot accommodation project with the aim of helping her adhere to the child protection plan created for her son. She received targeted support from on-site staff and the chance to take part in accredited learning in informal groups. The life coach on the project reports that:

"She and I agreed to work with helping her accept responsibility in small steps, using weekly goals, diaries and writings which she could then talk through with me in our sessions. We considered what type of parent R wanted to be, using her own childhood to ascertain what was and wasn't helpful or healthy.

"Looking at a fantasy future for her son and then unpicking what a good enough parent would need to do to get him there, R wrote out a list of what she wanted to give her son and how she could be a good enough mum. When we compared it, this list contained all the same advice and orders that social services had listed in the child protection meetings. R had developed the list herself, spending time thinking about each issue and the impact her actions would have on her son, resulting in a plan that was not something she wanted to rebel against, nor a list of things she 'had' to do, but instead a clear plan of what she wanted for her son and the ways in which she could achieve that.

"Information was shared with R's social worker, pilot staff and her family, creating a unified approach towards working with R to encourage her to take responsibility for herself.

"R has improved in her care of herself and her son. Her flat has been tidier, her son healthier and her attendance at meetings and groups positive, with R feeling that she is getting more out of it. The child protection agreements have been adhered to and everyone involved has seen clear changes in her attitude and behaviour."

The outcomes of the young parents living at the pilot project are improving. The young parent who moved from supported into independent accommodation was living at the pilot from the beginning – June 2009. She participated in the accredited groups, which allowed her to move into mainstream further education. She is now doing four A Levels.

Case study: Conditionality for teenage parents at Sheffield Foyer

When a resident moves into Sheffield Foyer they are interviewed and assessed, at which point they are told about Foyer conditionality and the expectation to engage.

Pregnant women go through a similar process but one which is tailored for them, with specific questions and assessments. At this point, a parent and baby worker is present with a monitoring and review worker. It is explained to the pregnant young mother (and her partner if appropriate) that there may be more expected of them than other residents – there is extra training in parenting and they will only have accommodation in Sheffield Foyer until the baby is six months old so need to be ready to accept an independent tenancy by then. This can be quite daunting, so the Foyer tries to accept young women early on in their pregnancies rather then late on (although this does not preclude accepting young women with more advanced pregnancies).

When they move in, residents are inducted and receive a move-in pack plus information on parent and baby unit policy, which explains the particular rules of the unit – these are especially crucial once a pregnant woman gives birth and has the child as the safety of the child is paramount. Every two months residents have a review session with a monitoring officer, as well as weekly meetings with a parent and baby worker to engage in training. The manager meets the parent and baby worker each month to track the progress of each young mother. The rota for training and workshops is set each week for residents to choose from, so there are flexible options for all residents including young mothers.

Residents are encouraged to participate in additional evening and external activities, in service development through resident meetings and in giving feedback on the learning programme through the suggestions box and regular resident questionnaires. Resident representatives are elected on an ongoing basis and when appointed are given job descriptions and training by the Foyer Manager. The Residents' Representatives Group organises activities, reviews policy, interviews new staff and represents residents at meetings, including weekly staff meetings and quarterly Foyer Advisory Committee meetings.

If the young mothers fail to engage, there is a process – the training team meets each week to look at this and the steps are as follows:

1. An initial letter is sent to the young mother informing her of the situation and why it is important to engage;
2. A second letter is sent;
3. A third letter is sent;
4. A warning is issued;
5. A final warning is issued;
6. A notice is served.

All of this will occur in a two month period, so the young mother is given the opportunity and the push to gain focus. These reminders of conditionality are always positive in tone, focusing on the need to take advantage of the opportunities available, and stressing the value and quality of support on offer.

Case study: Conditionality for teenage parents in Bromford Housing Group

In Bromford Housing Group, for both floating support and accommodation based services, the support tools which are used to jointly work with a young person to establish their support needs and aspirations, help to form the basis of a compact style agreement.

The way in which support is structured and delivered means that there are a number of key milestones which establish and reinforce a clear set of expectations around support. For example, during a 'how can we support you?' discussion and assessment, support workers set out what the service can and cannot do, the way in which support is delivered including frequency and type of session, what can be expected of a support worker, together with expectations of the way in which the young person will engage in support. It is imperative that the young person understands what services can be provided and is in a position to make an informed choice as to whether it is for them.

Similar discussions take place periodically through the support process, such as during a 'looking forward' assessment, which takes place at least quarterly.

Bromford Housing Group aims to work with their residents in a way which helps them to make informed choices based on a clear understanding of the consequences attached to each option. This approach underpins conversations, including ones around engagement with the service, and residents are clear about the potential consequences of not participating in support. These consequences will be specific to each resident - support workers use their knowledge of the individual, their circumstances and progress towards achieving their goals to clearly set out consequences. The aim is to use consequences as a motivator.

Discussions are reiterated, including those about consequences, in a formal letter. Bromford Housing Group may involve other agencies who can often help to reinforce consequences.

Clearly in accommodation based services there is the added conditionality attached to tenancy agreements. Staff discuss tenancy agreements at length with their residents, both pre-tenancy and throughout the tenancy. Depending on the specific circumstances of each individual, parents, carers, guardians and referring agents may also be involved in discussions around the importance of maintaining tenancy obligations and the risks of breaching them. It is made clear to young families that they are responsible for their visitors, and that their visitors' behaviour could also put them at risk of losing their home. In addition to spelling out responsibilities and expectations, support is also given to help them to manage their tenancies appropriately.

Staff aim to help a young person develop a clear understanding of their tenancy rights and responsibilities – this is done as part of individual support sessions and group events – including sessions with local landlords and the Local Authority's Housing Allocations team. When issues arise which are broadly tenancy related, staff will work with the individual to address them. This will start with some honest conversations, understanding why the specific events have occurred, looking at options for preventing reoccurrence, identifying what steps need to be taken to achieve this, agreeing some SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) targets; while at the same time discussing the consequences of reoccurrence. This will then be revisited in keyworking.

A system of escalating actions is employed – staff will always discuss things with the young people, and will seek to understand why their behaviour hasn't been modified and will reinforce what the consequences of non-compliance are. Should events become more serious, staff will reiterate the conversations that have taken place and the agreements that have been made in writing. They will discuss with their residents the risks they are taking and the potential for losing their home, and what the consequences of finding themselves homeless are likely to be.

Should it be necessary to serve notice, staff will always present this as an opportunity to turn things around, and will actively work with the resident to ensure the tenancy doesn't need to end through eviction.

Staff are also very clear with the young families involved in such procedures, of the process for move-on from the accommodation based services and the level of information that any prospective landlord will want from Bromford Housing Group. Generally young families in accommodation based schemes will identify one of their key goals as living independently in their own (permanent) home with their children. Working jointly and proactively towards this goal is a great motivation for engagement.

Leadership

From the survey responses received, it is clear that project leadership has three key functions in ensuring that the project is successful:

1. Understanding the role of the service in its local context and promoting the service to the right partners and referral agents;

2. Ensuring that the staff engaged in the project have the right skills and competencies for teenage parents to receive an effective and valuable service. These skills and competencies may be different in some respects from those required for working with other young people;

3. Ensuring that the culture of the organisation is one which promotes positive engagement and progression.

On 8th December 2010 the Foyer Federation hosted a facilitated leadership workshop in London for all of the Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilot areas, that was focused on how project leads respond to the changes that the end of the pilots would bring. They were asked to prepare in advance a presentation on:

▶ The changes that had happened since the start of the pilot;
▶ The changes the pilot leads wanted to sustain;
▶ The three main barriers to sustaining those changes.

Pilot area leads then focused on how to address the barriers that were identified. Finally, they were given the opportunity to develop a plan of action up to the end of the pilot (and slightly beyond) that would enable them to address their identified barriers most successfully. The main findings from this workshop in respect of leading the pilots were:

▶ The importance of communicating and engaging with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible – including other directorates or sections of the pilot local authority, especially those that deal with child poverty issues;

▶ How to communicate the outcomes of the project in a commissioning environment that can be input-driven;

▶ Where the pilot 'sits' in the local authority in terms of its sponsoring department or directorate is significant. To ensure that pilots are visible and valued by all concerned, it is important to understand the priorities and concerns of all departments where the outcome being delivered is relevant;

▶ The potential for elements of the pilots to influence the development of the national and local child poverty strategies and needs assessments, as well as the Early Intervention Grant to Local Authorities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

From the responses received to the survey and given in the leadership workshop, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Where the value of expertise in providing enhanced support for teenage parents is well understood and promoted, this can have a significant impact in improving outcomes for teenage parents themselves;

2. The Teenage Parent Supported Housing Pilots have demonstrated that enhanced housing support for teenage parents delivers outcomes that cut across different areas of priority for national and local Government. It is essential that the leaders of projects that deliver housing support for teenage parents are aware of what these priorities are and can articulate them to appropriate audiences;

3. Whilst elements of conditionality are inherent in most service relationships, these could be better understood and perhaps, as a result, the beneficial elements of the conditional relationship for the service user could be better exploited;

4. Provided that due attention is paid to the skills and knowledge of support staff, the engagement and involvement of young people as service users and relationships with other services as discussed earlier in the report, it is clear that floating support can provide an effective option in terms of enhanced housing support for teenage parents;

5. Engaging and involving young people in the support offer is an essential criterion for the success of enhanced housing support;

6. In some cases supported lodgings may be a beneficial option, particularly for teenage parents whose needs are lower than average.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can therefore be made:

1 Service managers should understand and demonstrate the 'value added' that their project brings in a local context. They should have an appreciation of the languages and priorities of key stakeholder groups in their local area, as this will assist in their communication and influencing activities. The good practice identified in this report demonstrates that: enhanced housing support can provide localised solutions that bring together partners in a local context to deliver a package of holistic support. Additional opportunities to share practice amongst pilot participants and other providers may prove beneficial.

2 Acknowledging the conditionality inherent in services may help to improve service delivery. Understanding conditionality in terms of incentives and opportunities rather than sanctions may prove useful when dealing with this particular group, whose extreme vulnerability (and the vulnerability of their children) makes imposing additional sanctions inappropriate. Viewing the service as a deal between the organisation(s) providing support and the teenage parent, may help both in monitoring service effectiveness and, as we have seen, in changing user attitudes and motivations. The 'ten principles of conditionality' discussed earlier in this report may well be useful in this regard.

3 Engaging and involving young people in scoping, determining and enabling the support that they receive should be an essential component of any enhanced housing support offer. This should, where possible, include young fathers.

4 When commissioning an enhanced housing support service for teenage parents, attention should be paid to commissioning for progression. There should be a focus on progression outcomes in planning dialogues and in developing the service specification.
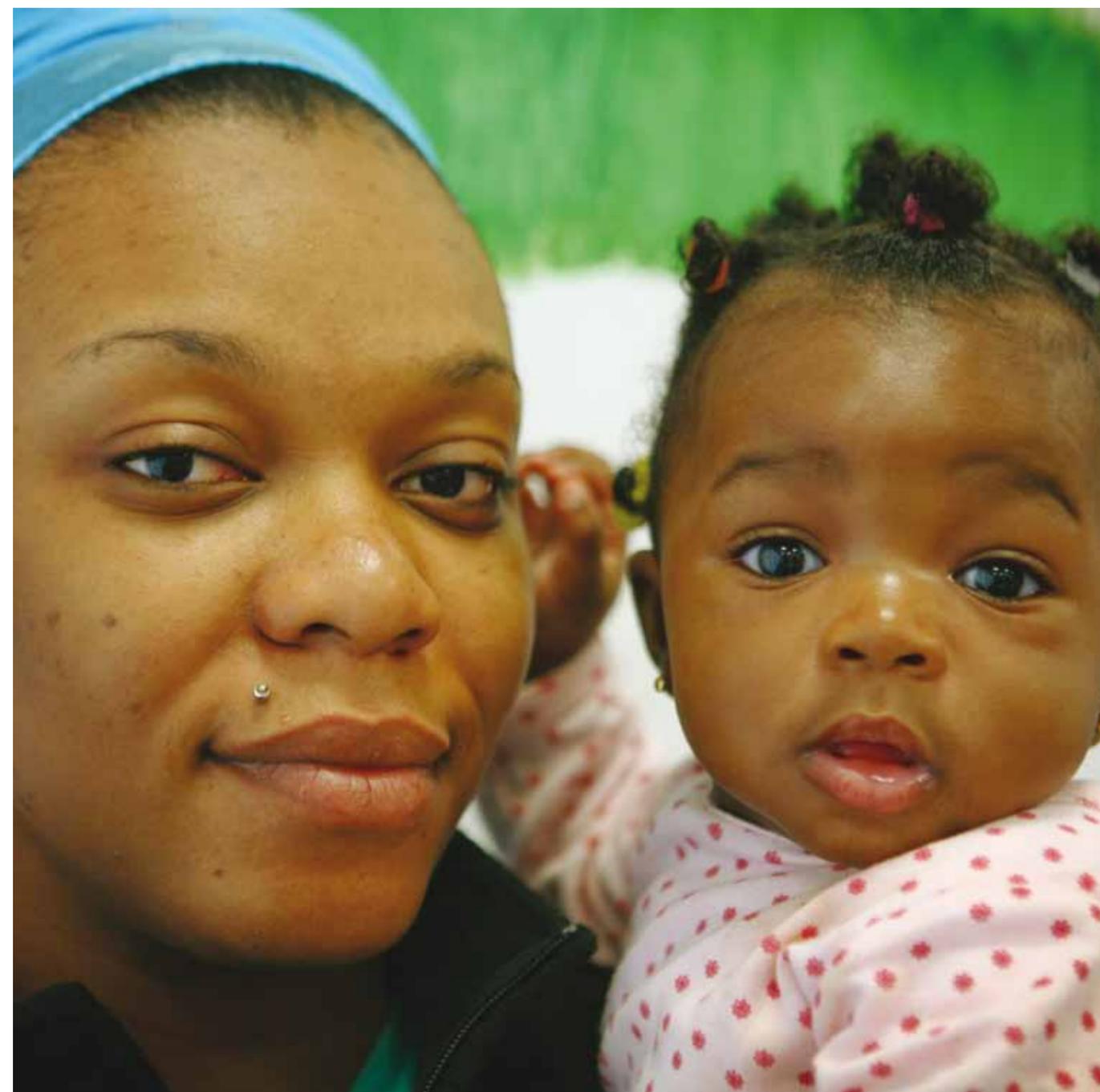
Glossary of terms

Supported accommodation, (also known as **supported housing**), and support to help young people find and maintain independent accommodation are key elements in preventing and tackling youth homelessness. The **housing support** on offer varies from provider to provider according to the terms of their contract, but will contain as a minimum elements around: maintaining a tenancy; budgeting; staying healthy; and staying safe.

Local housing authorities and their partners (**Supporting People**, Children's Services, Youth Offending Teams, Registered Social Landlords and voluntary sector providers) work together to commission accommodation based services and floating support (see below) to meet the needs of young people at risk of homelessness in their areas.

Floating support is mainly used for those with low to medium support needs, enabling them to live in their own accommodation and therefore has a key preventative role. Such services may be known by a number of different terms including resettlement or tenancy sustainment, but the core service is similar:

▸ It aims to increase young people's ability to live independently in mainstream housing, through a mixture of practical and personal support;

▸ It is linked to the individual – it follows them when they move accommodation and support diminishes over time as people move towards independence;

▸ It acts as a broker for a wider set of services that the young person may need.

Supported lodging schemes provide accommodation for a young person within a family home. The young person has their own room and shares the kitchen and bathroom facilities with the householder or 'host'. Hosts can be families, couples or single people.

The **Common Assessment Framework** (CAF) is designed for children and young people with additional needs and should be used as the basis for assessment for young people with housing and other needs. To be really effective, any assessment of young people's needs should aim to support positive long term outcomes for young people, as well as identify their immediate needs such as housing and an income. Homelessness assessments should feed into the holistic CAF, looking at a wide range of aspects of the young person's life, not only their housing issues or

needs. Opportunities for prevention should form part of the assessment, for example considering needs and options for family mediation and getting support from extended family.

Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation centres providing safe and secure housing, support and training for young people aged 16 – 25. There are three key tests of 'Foyerness':

1. Is the **focus** of the service on helping young people, aged 16 – 25, who have experienced disadvantage and are homeless or in housing need, to achieve the transition from dependence to independence?

2. Is the **approach** to meeting the young person's needs a holistic one? Does the service offer integrated access to, at a minimum, affordable accommodation, training, guidance, personal development and job search facilities?

3. Is the **relationship** with the young person based on a formal agreement, as to how the Foyer's facilities and local community resources will be used in making the transition to independence, and is that commitment a condition of continued residence in the Foyer?

References to services that are '**Foyer-like**', therefore, are to services which may not call themselves, or be acknowledged or accredited as a Foyer, but who adopt some or all of the three principles above in their working practices.