

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to update the Committee about the developments of the Virtual Babies/Teenage Pregnancy Project. The Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Background

- 1.1 This project developed from a discussion between a group of young people and a youth worker from Fender Youth Club, around the young people's aspirations to become young parents and their need to experience the realities of parenthood. This led on to the young people putting in a Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) bid for five virtual babies. This project is run in conjunction with Response and Merseyside Police.

2 Virtual Baby/Teenage Pregnancy Project

- 2.1 The babies are used as a tool for young people to complete a ten week sexual health/ teenage pregnancy programme. The sessions covered in this programme are:
- Two sexual health and relationship sessions- delivered by Response
 - Ambitions for the future session
 - Police workshop- covering alcohol and sexual activity etc
 - Effects of alcohol and drugs on a foetus, using drug and alcohol baby simulators
 - 'Preparation 4 Baby'- 'Bump', using pregnancy simulator
 - 'Preparation 4 baby'- What you and baby will need
 - 'Preparation 4 Baby - Handel with Care' (shaken baby), using simulator baby
 - Pressures and problems - DVD
 - Preparation for baby - parenting class
- 2.2 After these sessions are complete the young people take their baby home for the weekend and are responsible for all the aspects of caring for the baby during the day and night.
- 2.3 The aim of this programme is not to put young people off having children, but to ensure they have all the information about the realities of parenthood in order that they can make informed choices about when they would like to start a family.
- 2.4 The project equips young people with the information and knowledge to protect themselves in order for them to be safe and not engage in risky sexual behaviour.

3. Outcomes and Impacts

- 3.1. The project provides young people with information around sexual health and staying safe. It allows young people to explore the realities of caring for a baby and how to look after them safely.
- 3.2. 22 young people have participated in the course to date. 16 of these young people have successfully completed the course, gaining an accredited outcome in the form of a certificate of completion from Life Choices.
- 3.3. Links have been made with the Woodchurch High School. The school promotes the course to their students so there is always an ongoing demand. The next course starts in April 2009.

3.4. Another high school and a college have made inquiries about the project.

3.5. Comments from young people who have participated:

"I have learnt about the pressures of having a baby young and what happens if a child is not being treated properly"

"I have learnt that it is hard to cope with having a baby when your young and all the pressures of it"

"That you can call the police if you feel unsafe"

"What it would be like to be pregnant and the effects on babies from drugs and alcohol"

"How much a baby costs"

"How to stay safer in situations"

"That it is hard to work out what a baby wants"

"That I don't want a baby young"

4. Future Developments

4.1. Following on from the last funding bid the young people secured further funding from YOF to fund another five babies and a training course in February 2009. The course will train young people, who have already been through the project, how to deliver the course to other young people.

4.2. This development will mean that the course will have a greater impact being peer led and will be delivered to many more young people in the local area and eventually Wirral wide.

5. Financial implications

5.1. The Youth Club now has all the equipment to deliver the course to groups of ten young people at a time. The only other financial implications are the up keep of the equipment.

6. Staffing implications

6.1. This project is supported by Fender Youth Club's staffing establishment.

7. Equal opportunities implications

7.1. The first two cohorts have been female; workers are addressing this, making it assessable for males.

8. Community safety implications

8.1. There are none

9. Local Agenda 21 implications

9.1. There are none.

10. Planning implications

10.1. There are none.

11. Anti-poverty implications

11.1. This is a life skills course, giving young people the knowledge and understanding to make informed life choices, improving their quality of life.

12. **Social inclusion implications**

12.1. There are none.

13. **Local Member Support implications**

13.1. This report affects Irby/Frankby/Greasby/Upton ward.

14. **Background papers**

14.1. There are none.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

(1) The Committee notes the report.

Howard Cooper

Director of Children's Services