An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush green landscape. The river is dark blue and curves around a large, grassy island in the center. The surrounding land is covered in dense green vegetation, including trees and grass. The sky is not visible, and the overall scene is bright and vibrant.

# Deloitte.

## Changing Direction Evaluation of Straight Talking Peer Education

11<sup>th</sup> August 2016



# Contents

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1. Executive summary	4
2. Introduction	7
3. Context	9
4. Engagement	15
5. Sustainability and commerciality: Growing the model?	25
6. Final analysis and overall conclusion	28
Appendix 1: Evaluation contributors	31
Appendix 2: Conception rates	32

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# 1. Executive summary

## Background and approach

Teenage pregnancy has been a long-standing phenomenon in the UK. Over the last few years the profile of teenage pregnancy has reduced, despite the UK still having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe.

Straight Talking is a charity aimed at raising teenage awareness of the realities of early parenthood. The programme uses peer educators who have been teenage parents to inform pupils of their own experiences and the challenges they faced. Deloitte has undertaken an independent evaluation of Straight Talking's peer education approach, analysing its impact and making suggestions for improvement.

Deloitte conducted a mixture of desk-based research, comparator analysis and stakeholder engagement with three schools in (the) three London Boroughs and one school in the West Midlands. While in the schools, Deloitte engaged with young people, who received the course in a prior year, to assess the impact of the programme. The sessions included a short quantitative questionnaire and a qualitative discussion. Deloitte also engaged with the teachers responsible for co-ordinating the Straight Talking programme, the peer educators and the Straight Talking management team.

## Need

The overall trend for teenage pregnancy in England and Wales is downwards and this is to be welcomed. That said the evidence highlight (s) three reasons indicating a continued need for intervention:

- In different parts of the country, teenage pregnancy is still a significant issue. Official data highlights significant variations in rates of conception;
- Sex and relationships education requires improvement in over a third of schools. This is challenging not least because the need continues to evolve (Ofsted report on personal, social, health and economic education, "Not Yet Good Enough" 2013). Notably Straight Talking have added a two session module that covers healthy relationships, grooming, coercion, sexual exploitation, sexting and the legalities of indecent material online;
- There is an enhanced policy focus on preventing young people becoming NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and finding pathways out of being NEET.

## Headline findings on effectiveness and impact

The evaluation's headline findings in relation to the peer education programme are as follows:

- The quantitative and qualitative research shows that beneficiary perceptions have changed following the programme. This is evidenced by an increase in beneficiaries stating that it would be very difficult to be a teenage parent and 100% of students stating that it would be challenging to have a baby within the next two years. When discussing the programme with beneficiaries, they confirmed that as a result of the course they have more understanding about the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy. The change is both in the immediate aftermath of the programme and was found to be sustained in participants one year after their participation;

- Both beneficiaries and teachers confirmed that the course provided life lessons that have changed students' perspective on the issue. Students said that the programme tackled many of the myths that surround teenage pregnancy, especially regarding finance, benefits and relationships. The teachers agreed that the course provided students with a "reality check" and provided them with useful lessons which they can carry with them;
- Almost all students agreed that the programme has changed their perceptions of young parents. While several said they had previously held a negative view, students stated that after the Straight Talking programme, they could better relate to a young parent and the challenges they face. Teachers agreed stating that the programme effectively tackles the stigma attached to teenage parents by "directly challenging" any negatively held view points;
- The authentic first-hand experience of the peer educators employed by Straight Talking was credible and compelling to students. Students felt that Straight Talking provided them with a view of what life is really like following the birth of a child, an insight which can be difficult to obtain elsewhere. They enjoyed the approach of using peer educators and felt that they delivered the sessions better than a teacher would have. Teachers all agreed with this. Our analysis highlighted that the peer-educator employees are well trained and use tried and tested approaches to unpack key issues and messages within the classroom. The effectiveness of the peer-educator in communicating is therefore interlinked with the high quality of the messages and supporting material they were applying;
- The majority of students surveyed had not received a session from a male peer educator, although those who had, considered this a strength of the Straight Talking programme. They stated that this was "interesting" and provided a "different side of parenthood". The peer educators (male and female) found that the male peer educators created a different dynamic and helped open up discussion with a wider range of pupils than if it had been a female peer educator. For some, including teachers, the male peer educator was a positive surprise. Those students who had not received a session conducted by a male, all agreed that they would have liked to have had this opportunity; and
- The findings from our research suggests that the key to understanding this relates to maturity in terms of the subject matter. If the students are not of an age to engage with the subject matter it will neither be meaningful or impactful. If students are already sexually active, then it may be too late. There is an appropriate window of opportunity to run the programme. Peer educators contested that an age group in a school in a particular area might work well, while being too late for another school in another area. In this study years 10 and 11 students received and benefited from the programme. There was no apparent differentiation in the impact among the students engaged across these two year groups.

### **Peer educator approach**

The peer educator approach is central to the model. Teachers could deliver the messages, however the authenticity of the peer educators provides a stand-out feature which alongside the quality interactive content, creates memorable and impactful sessions for the students. There are also strong outcomes for the peer educators, not least their self-development, employment and enhanced future employability. The sustainability of the model is a challenge. This is most apparent in the cocktail of funding required and secondly in the need to regularly replenish and train the peer educator pool. The evidence indicates that the wider funding mix is subsidising the peer education service in schools (who regularly spoke of being unable to afford the service without a discount). Therefore future growth of the peer educator model is likely to continue to rely on a wider funding mix. Market research (e.g. in

potential target geographies) would further inform the viability of operating it on a more commercial basis.

### **Overall conclusion**

Putting the quantitative and the qualitative monitoring and evaluation data together indicates that the model applied by Straight Talking is effective and has an immediate and sustained impact on young people's views and understanding of teenage pregnancy.

The qualitative data from pupils, teachers and peer educators is extremely positive. It reinforces the stand-out design and delivery of the Straight Talking Peer Education model. The characteristics that are central to creating this stand-out are the:

- Preparation of the peer-educators in terms of their training and the confidence that they can deliver an impactful session on a potentially difficult subject;
- Delivery by peer-educators with authentic first-hand experience;
- Inclusion of male and female peer-educators in the delivery team; and
- Quality of the interactive, memorable content which can stimulate and engage the pupils.

There are some issues which need continued focus (e.g. recruitment and retention of male peer educators) and some potential constraints (schools wanting one single session rather than a programme of five) however the model is fundamentally sound.

Straight Talking's years of experience, programme development and delivery and the development of standardised programmes and processes which have been codified in the standard operations manual, combined with the need for such an intervention (based on diverse rates of teenage conception, the poor quality of sex education in a significant minority of schools, and the need for tailored support for the interlinked challenges of teenage pregnancy and NEET status) does suggest positive potential for geographic growth.

A detailed growth plan informed by market testing with potential service recipients should be developed. The commerciality of growing the model is challenging. Investment would be needed to extend (e.g. additional staff members) to a new region. Potential buyers (e.g. schools) are increasingly cash-strapped. The growth plan would therefore need to give consideration to the funding plan. The growth plan could become the basis for discussion with existing or potential third party funders (e.g. Big Lottery Fund or local authorities).

# 2. Introduction

## 2.1 Straight Talking

Straight Talking is a charity aimed at raising teenage awareness of the realities of early parenthood. The programme employs peer educators who have been teenage parents to inform pupils of their own experiences and the challenges they faced. Working with Straight Talking, Deloitte have performed an evaluation of the peer education approach, analysing its impact and making suggestions for improvement.

## 2.2 Terms of reference

The key questions to answer through evaluation are as follows:

- Is there any evidence of Straight Talking providing useful knowledge which would change the perception of programme beneficiaries regarding teenage parenthood?
- Do the sessions provided give important life lessons and change the outlook of programme beneficiaries?
- Does Straight Talking challenge discrimination / perception of young parents amongst your targeted stakeholders?
- Do Straight Talking beneficiaries consider peer education to provide an effective model of communication?
- Is it useful for Straight Talking programmes to have both male and female peer educators leading sessions?
- Which age group provides the most tangible evidence of impact across all of the above?
- Is the peer education model itself sustainable for the planned future growth of Straight Talking? Does the commerciality of Straight Talking support this growth?

## 2.3 Methodology

Our methodology included the following stages.

### **Stage I: Strategic Context:**

This included a review of rates of teenage pregnancy, key policies and strategies that set the strategic context for the work of Straight Talking.

### **Stage II: Desk-Based Research**

Review of information currently captured from Straight Talking monitoring data, previous evaluations and publications. This included available monitoring data from the previous year's peer educator sessions with the schools taking part in our primary research. The desk based research also included a review of funding and financial data.

### **Stage III: Comparator Analysis**

Analysis of comparator initiatives and analysis to understand the use of peer education model.

### **Stage IV: Stakeholder Engagement**

Discussion with key staff in one-to-one sessions (CEO, Deputy CEO, Finance Office) and two focus groups with peer educators.

Engagement with three schools in three London Boroughs, and one school in the West Midlands where Straight Talking has previously supplied peer educator programmes in the 2014/2015 school year. This included the following schools:

- Robert Clack (Barking and Dagenham Area);
- Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls (Ealing Area);
- Heathlands School (Hounslow Area); and
- Grace Academy (Solihull, Birmingham).

We worked with Straight Talking and schools to engage with young people in classes / cohorts that took part in the peer education sessions in the last academic year. The rationale for this is to test what the young people remember and what their understanding and attitudes are currently (i.e. has there been a change not just immediately the class ends, but one year after). The sessions with young people included a short quantitative questionnaire, aligned to the questionnaire used by peer educators pre- and post- their sessions, and a qualitative discussion. When in the schools we also observed a number of live sessions delivered by peer educators.

In the schools we also engaged with the teacher responsible for co-ordinating the Straight Talking programme with young people.

We also engaged with peer educators within a focus group format.

#### **Task V: Analysis and reporting**

Collation and organisation of all the relevant findings, developing emerging findings, analysis and reporting.

# 3. Context

## 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section of the report is to provide an overview of the strategic context within which Straight Talking operates. Teenage pregnancy has been a long-standing phenomenon in the UK and continues to be an issue often highlighted by the media and the general public. Over the last few years the profile of teenage pregnancy has reduced, despite the UK still having the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe. The key factors affecting the strategic context of Straight Talking are illustrated below in Figure 3.1. The report will discuss each of the areas in turn.

Figure 3.1 – Strategic Context



## 3.2 Policy

The ‘Teenage Pregnancy Strategy’ (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999) represented the first co-ordinated attempt by the government to challenge both the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy in the UK. The strategy had two goals:

- To reduce the rate of conceptions among those under-18 in England by 50% by 2010; and
- To increase the proportion of young parents in education, employment and training to 60% by 2010.

Straight Talking provided a strategic fit with both components of the strategy, namely better prevention of teenage pregnancy and better support of teenage parents, by employing existing teenage parents to deliver its programmes to young people in schools.

Underpinning the strategy development were wider concerns about the health, relationships, education and employment (and by implication the economic context) of those who do become young parents and the poor outcomes for their children. In addition, teenage pregnancy has been the issue of broader debate and media scrutiny in the UK connected to many other social issues including socio-economic inequalities, the cost to the state of

teenage pregnancy, the abortion debate, youth unemployment (and the description of NEETS<sup>1</sup>), the quality of parenting and the different parenting roles of mothers and fathers.

By 2010, the national under-18 conception rate had fallen by 23.7% since 1999 with births to under-18s down by 32.8%, bringing the rate down to its lowest level for over 40 years. Since then, the rates have fallen further, down by just over 50% in 2014 from 1999 levels (22.8 per thousand in 2014 compared to 44.8 per thousand in 1999; giving an overall reduction of 50.9%). Whilst the under-18 conception rate has been falling, it is nevertheless still notable that the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy has not been revisited by the government since 1999.

The government's Public Health Outcomes Framework 2013 to 2016 (Department of Health, 2013) includes under-18 teenage conception rate as 1 of 3 sexual health indicators and a number of other indicators disproportionately affecting young parents and their children. The Department of Health Framework for Sexual Health Improvement in England (Department of Health, 2013) also states that 'continuing to reduce under-18 pregnancies is a high priority' and provides factual information as to why this is the case, including:

- Teenage parents are 20% more likely to have no qualifications at age 30;
- Teenage parents are 22% more likely to be living in poverty at 30, and much less likely to be employed or living with a partner; and
- Children of Teenage mothers have a 63% increased risk of being born into poverty and are more likely to have accidents and behavioural problems.

An Ofsted report on personal, social, health and economic education in English schools in 2012<sup>2</sup> was entitled "Not yet good enough". Its conclusions included:

- Sex and relationships education required improvement in over a third of school. In secondary schools it was because too much emphasis was placed on the mechanics of reproduction and too little on relationships, sexuality, the influence of pornography on student's understanding of health sexual relationships, dealing with emotions and staying safe;
- Lack of high-quality, age-appropriate sex and relationships education in more than a third of schools is a concern as it may leave children and young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation. This is because they have not been taught the appropriate language or developed the confidence to describe unwanted behaviours or know where to go for help.

### 3.3 Teenage pregnancy rates

In this subsection we present an overview of the teenage conception rates for

- England and Wales;
- London;
- The West Midlands;
- The three London Boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Ealing and Hounslow) in which fieldwork was carried out; and
- The West Midlands Borough (Solihull) in which fieldwork was also carried out.

This information provides a broader context for the work of Straight Talking considered within the scope of the evaluation.

#### England and Wales Conception Rates

The latest issued conception figures show that in 2014 the number of under-18 conceptions in England and Wales was 22,653. This was the lowest number of conceptions in this age

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<sup>1</sup> NEETs – "Not in Education, Employment or Training". See section 2.4.

<sup>2</sup> "Not yet good enough: personal, social, health and economic education in English schools in 2012. Ofsted, Published May 2013.

group since 1969. Just over half of these (50.8%) resulted in abortion; a proportion which has remained relatively constant since 2006.

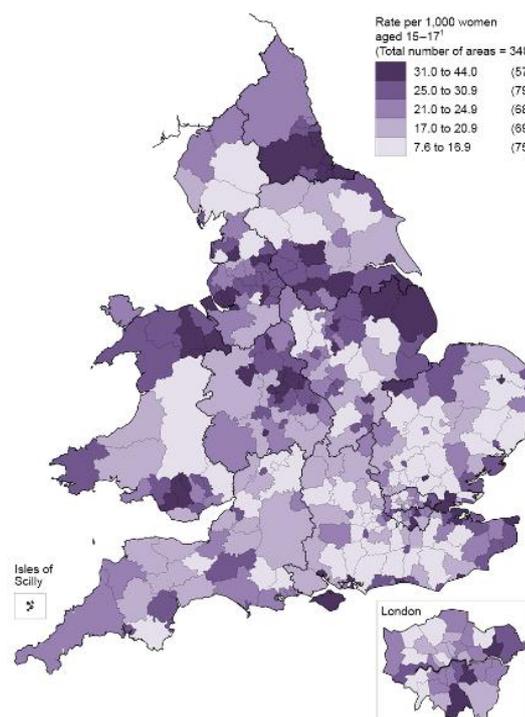
The conception rate (per thousand young people) for those aged 15-17, was 22.9, and represents a decrease of 51% since 1998, when the rate was 47.1. The conception for girls aged 13-15 was 4.4, of which 72% were to girls aged 15. The under-16 conception rate is also the lowest on record (since 1969).

There are a number of factors which could explain the recent fall in teenage pregnancies, such as:

- The perception of stigma associated with being a teenage mother (McDermott, et al., 2004).
- A shift in the aspirations of young women towards education (Broeke & Hamed, 2008);
- The increased government focus on sex and relationship education (Office for National Statistics, 2016); and
- Improved access to contraception (Office for National Statistics, 2016);

Figure 3.2, highlights the under 18 conception rates in 2013. Within different geographies there are significant variations in rates of conception.

**Figure 3.2 Conception rates per 1000 women aged 15-17, England and Wales 2013**



Source: Office of National Statistics

### 3.4 Factors influencing teenage pregnancy

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy document (**Social Exclusion Unit, 1999**) set out 'risk factors' to identify young people with an increased likelihood of becoming pregnant or becoming a teenage parent. The most significant factors were given as 'poverty', 'having a mother who was a teenage parent', or being a 'child in care'. Other associated factors included low educational attainment, low school attendance, disengagement from (and dislike of) school, poor mental health, involvement with the police, drug and alcohol misuse and children who have experienced sexual abuse.

The policy report completed by Straight Talking in 2010 identified "typologies" of teenage parents based on their experience, which included "accidental", "risk-takers", "career-choice" and "coerced" with wider issues ranging from conception failure, alcohol misuse, low-self-esteem and domestic violence. These indicate the complexity around addressing issues associated with teenage pregnancy.

### 3.5 Economic and social cost of teenage pregnancy and NEET

The youth unemployment rate for December 2015 to February 2016 was reported at 13.7 per cent reflecting the reality that 627,000 young people aged 16 to 24 cannot find work (**Office for National Statistics, 2016**). There are long term financial and economic implications associated with young people being 'NEET', namely, for their earning potential, but also for the nation's productivity and growth. Young parents are at risk of becoming NEET simply because of the difficult circumstances they face.

At a social level, other costs associated with high levels of NEET young people include increased levels of underachievement, cultural disaffection, poverty and crime. Personal costs can include wasted potential, low self-esteem, depression and in some instances early death.

The public costs of supporting young parents have been subject to considerable debate. A previous Straight Talking report (2010) noted that the Teenage Pregnancy Unit estimated a cost of £14,000 in public services to support the first year of a birth for a parent under-18. This included estimates around health and social costs as well as benefits. Further research was carried out by Straight Talking through a case study on one of their peer educators. This case study estimated that the cost to the state across a five year period was approximately £96,000 – the case study includes housing benefits, income support, child tax credit and estimated costs to the NHS for maternity care and delivery of the baby.

A report carried out by Deloitte in 2012, showed that the Social Return of Straight Talking for their peer educators was £8.93 for every £1 invested over 5 years. The primary benefit identified through the SROI analysis was costs saved by addressing disengagement and low aspirations amongst teenage parents. Of those who were NEET prior to taking on a Peer Education role at Straight Talking, 100% had gained valuable employability skills through the programme and 95% have either moved onto further training/ employment or whilst still employed by Straight Talking have also accessed other forms of employment, education and training opportunities, thus providing an indication of the value that can be placed on the programme for the young parents taking part.

### 3.6 Comparator analysis - Approaches to preventing teenage pregnancy

On the whole, research generally supports the use of peer-education, particularly for the use of sex and relationships education (National Children's Bureau, 1999), (Advocates for Youth, 2003). The literature suggests that there are a number of advantages to using peers to educate as opposed to adults, for example:

- Peers can use language that is more acceptable to and understandable to their peer groups;
- Young people are susceptible to peer influence and therefore messages will have greater impact if they come from a similarly aged person; and
- Young people are ready-made experts in communicating with their peers.

“Peer education is an approach which empowers young people to work with other young people, and which draws on the positive strength of the peer group. By means of appropriate training and support, the young people become active players in the educational process rather than passive recipients of a set message. Central to this work is the collaboration between young people and adults.”

### Fast Forward, national voluntary organisation promoting health and wellbeing

While literature appears to support the use of the peer education in preventing teenage pregnancy, there are a number of other companies who adopt a different approach.

- **Teens and Toddlers:** Teens and Toddlers is one such programme. Instead of focusing upon sexual health education and the impacts of teenage pregnancy, they focus upon the development and interpersonal skills of two age groups. The programme does this through an 18 week programme where young people (aged 13-16) from disadvantaged areas are paired as a mentor and role model to a child (aged 3-5) within a nursery, who is in need of extra support. The aim of the course is to raise the aspirations of the young people while preparing the children for “whole school readiness.” At the end of the programme the young people receive an accredited vocational NCFE (QCF) Entry Level 3 Award in Personal and Social Development.
- **Scottish Peer Education Network:** Whilst different from the Straight Talking model, the Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN) offers a more aligned approach to Straight Talking than Teens and Toddlers. SPEN focuses on empowering young people to work with other young people of a similar age group and from a similar background. The approach is based purely around peer education and it focuses on training young people up to be able to ‘teach’ a group of their peers about issues such as alcohol, drug abuse and sexual health. Although offering a wider range of subjects than Straight Talking, SPEN’s use of the peer education model is closely aligned. Similarly to Straight Talking, most of the sessions offered by SPEN are activity based and there is no formal qualification offered upon conclusion of the course.

The use of peer-education has also come under challenge because research regarding its effectiveness is varied, and evidence is often inconclusive on whether it works or how it works. Some research has showed that sometimes peers are not viewed as ‘reliable’ sources of information and often are not expected to question beliefs or behaviours of the participants and this could work counter to the purpose of the education (National Children’s Bureau, 1999). Some politicians have also suggested teenage mothers going into schools could encourage teenage pregnancies. We would note that this research found no evidence that the students receiving Straight Talking programme would be encouraged into teenage pregnancy. As this report will describe, the evidence points strongly towards strengthening understanding and prevention of teenage pregnancy.

It has been noted that schools who have used peer education are generally very positive about the experience and enthusiastic to continue using peer education approaches (National Children’s Bureau, 1999). This view is consistent with findings in previous independent research carried out for Straight Talking.

### 3.7 Previous evaluations of Straight Talking

Straight Talking has commissioned several evaluations of its work over its lifetime. The last two evaluations (carried out in 2009 and 2012 respectively) have been considered as part of this research in terms of their key findings.

Both these evaluations were supportive of the peer education model being employed by Straight Talking in delivering impactful messages to young people. The first in 2009 (funded by Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit in the

Department for Children Schools and Families, and undertaken by the Tavistock Institute) explored the extent to which information given through Straight Talking courses had an ongoing influence on young people's attitudes and decision-making, having the potential to bring about lasting attitude and behavioural change. It concluded that the "unique" approach of Straight Talking was "very effective in making students listen to, hear and remember the messages it seeks to deliver regarding the reality of teenage pregnancy". The second evaluation was carried out by Deloitte, and evaluated the programme based on its work in two London boroughs, namely, Barking and Dagenham and Kingston-upon-Thames. The evaluation concluded that Straight Talking aligned strongly with government-wide policies and encouraged young parents into training education and employment. It was also able to show, through SROI analysis that the social return of Straight Talking for peer educators was £8.93 for every £1 invested over a five year period.

### **3.8 Other evaluations of teenage pregnancy initiatives**

There have been a number of evaluations of initiatives aiming to reduce teenage pregnancy.

Hadley, in her presentation "Teenage Pregnancy: building on success<sup>3</sup>", highlighted that the provision of high quality sex and relationships education (SRE) and improved use of contraception are areas where the strongest empirical evidence exists illustrating an impact on teenage pregnancy rates. To continue this impact, Hadley believes that SRE and contraception provision should be made available to all, complemented with intensive support for young people at risk.

A C4EO review of targeted youth work undertaken suggested that while strategies to encourage sex education and contraceptive services are important, youth development programmes that promote healthy relationships and engagement with learning are key to lowering the rate of teenage pregnancy (C4EO, 2010)<sup>4</sup>.

Other literature demonstrates that there are often other positive outcomes for young people involved in pregnancy prevention initiatives that are not necessarily identified as key outcome measures. For example, interventions aimed at promoting behaviour changes also tend to increase confidence, motivation or emotional wellbeing in participants; and interventions aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy tended to increase autonomy and confidence, whether or not reduction in teenage pregnancy was achieved (Institute of Education, Social Science Research Unit, 2006).

### **3.9 Summary**

Straight Talking Peer Education is operating in a context of reducing teenage pregnancy at a national level, albeit with significant variations sub-regionally and within cities. At a national level there has been a growing policy focus on the complex issue of NEETs. This has an overlap with the issue of teenage pregnancy. There are still interventions seeking to reduce teenage pregnancy – some dedicated wholly to this and others addressing it among various societal challenges. Straight Talking Peer Education is, in broad terms, working both on the prevention of teenage pregnancy, and also in supporting teenage parents overcome NEET status and what that can mean.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.beds.ac.uk/howtoapply/departments/healthsciences/alison-hadley>

<sup>4</sup> <http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/youth/supportanddevelopment/default.aspx?themeid=16>

# 4. Engagement

## 4.1 Introduction

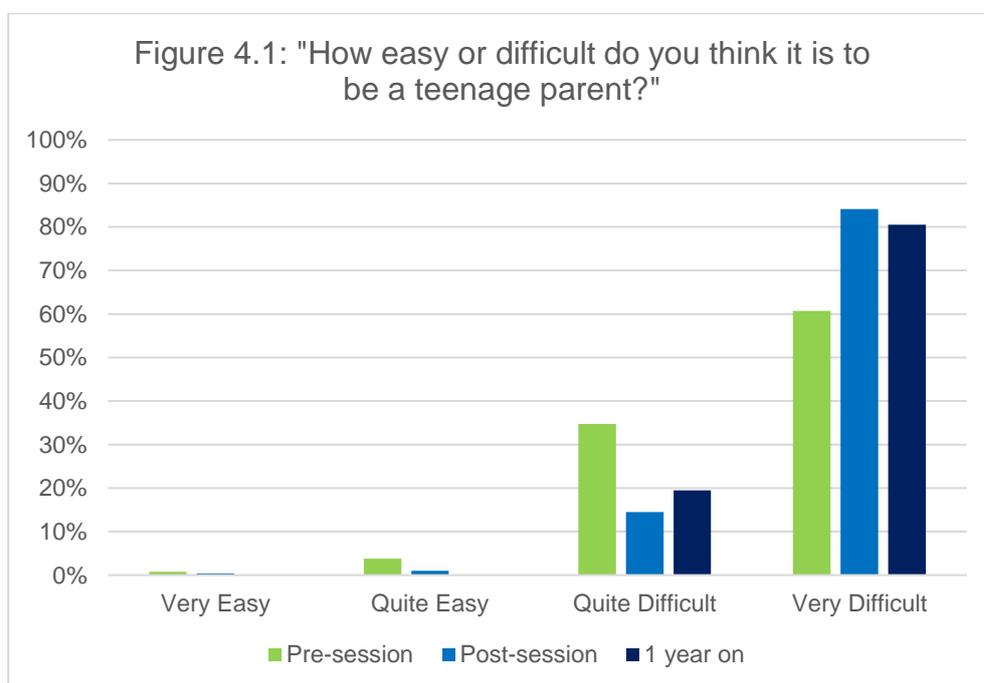
As part of the engagement, we met with four different schools in four different boroughs in England (three within London, and one in the West Midlands) and held workshops with beneficiaries who had received the Straight Talking sessions in the previous academic year. Three of the four schools had received sessions in Year 11, with one of the School receiving the sessions in Year 10; therefore students interviewed were in Year 12 and Year 11 respectively. In addition, three of the four sets of beneficiaries had only received one session for one hour, whilst the other set had received five sessions over five consecutive weeks.

## 4.2 Questionnaire data

### Pupil questionnaires

By way of context, the below analysis reflects the pre and post session views and attitudes of approximately 500 students who attended the teenage pregnancy session hosted by Straight Talking, which is set against the views of 41 students one year after they had received the sessions from Straight Talking<sup>5</sup>.

When asked how easy they thought being a single parent would be, most students initially believed it would be very difficult (60%), as shown in Figure 4.1 below. After delivery of the session to the students, this continued to be the most prevalent response, with the proportion of those who considered it very difficult increasing to almost 85%. There was a similarly high proportion of students who noted 'very difficult' as their response to same question one year on, it is noted that at that one year on, no student noted 'very easy' or 'quite easy' as their response.



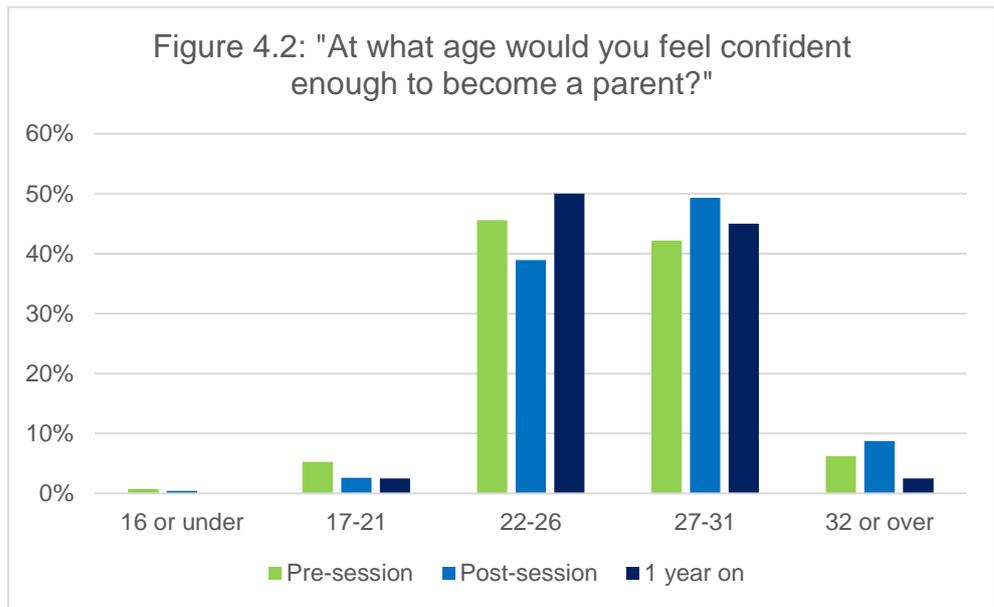
Source: Straight Talking Monitoring Data 2014-15 (Pre-session & Post-session) and Deloitte 2016 evaluation data (1 year on)

Students were also asked at what age they thought they would feel confident enough to become a parent; responses can be seen in Figure 4.2 below. In all instances, the

<sup>5</sup> Included within the sample of 41 student interviewed 'one year on' are two students who had received the session two years previous- thus these responses are indicative of perceptions 'two years on'.

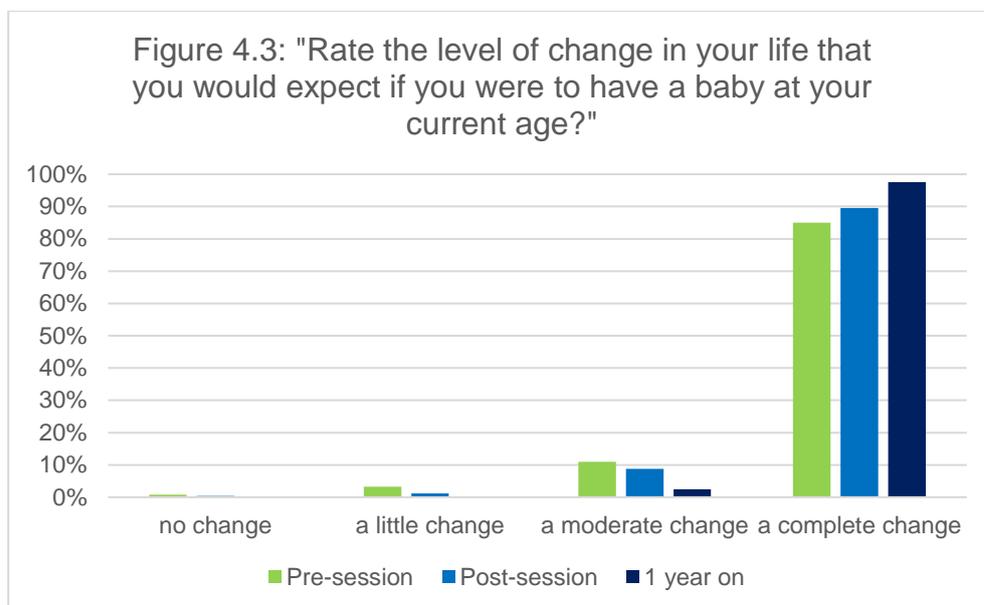
responses were heavily weighted between two options: 22-26 and 27-31. The most popular answer by students before they had received the sessions was between the ages of 22 and 26 years old. This changed after the session was delivered, with the majority of students believing that they would feel confident enough to become a parent between the ages of 27 and 31.

Additionally there is further evidence to highlight the immediate impact of the sessions. Focusing specifically on the subset who stated that they would feel confident under the age of 21, we see that from the original sample of 528 beneficiaries, 32 pupils or 6% selected this option. Post-course only 15 pupils (more than 50% less) continued to say that they would feel confident of becoming a parent under the age of 21, indicating the immediate impact of the course. The most popular response from beneficiaries one year after the sessions was again the 22-26 age group. It is noted that one year on, no students selected the 16 or under age group.



Source: Straight Talking Monitoring Data 2014-15 (Pre-session & Post-session) and Deloitte 2016 evaluation data (1 year on)

Responses provided by beneficiaries regarding the impact having a baby would have on their lives are provided below in Figure 4.3. The responses pre-session, post-session and one year on were in line with expectations, with most students believing that having a baby at their current age would completely change their lives. It is important to note that the response became more prominent as time went on, with 98% of the beneficiaries selecting this option one year on compared to 85% pre-session. Additionally, no beneficiaries interviewed one year post-session selected 'no change' or 'a little change' as their response.



Source: Straight Talking Monitoring Data 2014-15 (Pre-session & Post-session) and Deloitte 2016 evaluation data (1 year on)

### 4.3 Qualitative findings: Young people

This section contains findings from both beneficiary and teacher interviews. Straight Talking's programme has been assessed across a number of criteria, evaluating the effectiveness of the current programme and making suggestions for future growth.

#### 4.3.1 Delivery model

Straight Talking employs an interactive delivery model, based in classrooms and led by peer educators. The sessions are structured over a five week period or are deliverable as a condensed single session. Students were impressed by the delivery approach employed by Straight Talking. The course 'stood-out' from other offerings the students had experienced. The use of peer educators, instead of teachers was particularly well received. In terms of the model the following issues came through:

- **Distinctive:** When discussing the delivery model and the distinctiveness of the offering, students stated that while some had received sex education lessons, they had "not attended anything like Straight Talking before". One of the main differences between Straight Talking and previous sessions was that Straight Talking provided a comprehensive view of parenting from getting pregnant through to living with a baby and the various stages in-between. This was not something that other lessons appeared to offer, focusing instead on individual aspects of the journey.
- **Insight that matters:** Students felt that Straight Talking provided them with a view of what life is really like following birth, an insight which can be difficult to obtain elsewhere. They valued that they were free to ask the peer educators any questions. When asked how pupils could alternatively avail of such information, students mentioned using an internet search engine before accepting that this may not provide the level of detail they required. The life-cycle view of pregnancy provided by Straight Talking appears to offer students an insight over and above that of alternative offerings.
- **Interactive and memorable:** The interactive character of the sessions was considered helpful in engaging participants in memorable, impactful ways. For example the exercises performed with the students forced them to consider issues faced by young parents and evaluate how they would each address them. The Finance / Shopping exercise presented students with a realistic picture of how far

their money would stretch in the outside world. The “true or false” exercise offered students an opportunity to voice their own opinion while the “pram and stairs” session provided students with a view of the day-to-day practicalities of parenthood.

- **Peer educators not teachers:** Students enjoyed the approach of using peer educators to deliver the sessions and broadly stated that they viewed the educators as their peers. Students felt that it was easier to talk to a peer educator than a teacher which could in some instances, be “massively boring.” The young age of the peer educators appeared to contribute to this view with beneficiaries believing that the peer educators were more in touch with issues they faced than a teacher would be. Students appreciated that the educators were open about their own experience which made it easier for students to open up and ask any questions they had. Some mentioned that the educators reminded them of a relative such as an older cousin which helped to facilitate discussion. One student was sceptical of the message, stating he believed that the educators were instructed to deliver a negative view of pregnancy, leading him to distrust the educator. However, this appeared to be an individually held belief as all other students felt that the peer educator approach worked well in covering what can be a difficult subject.
- **Male not just female peer educators:** The use of male peer educators was considered a strength of Straight Talking. Those who had received sessions delivered by a male educator stated that this was “interesting” and provided a “different side of parenthood.” Those students who had not received a session conducted by a male, all agreed that they would have liked to have had this opportunity.

Notably Straight Talking introduced a policy during the 2015/16 academic year that all courses of length 3 session or more will get the perspective of both a male and a female educator. This aim was achieved in 92% or more of courses booked for 3-sessions or more. 73% of courses booked as 1 or 2 sessions only were delivered by female educators while 27% were delivered by young fathers.

#### 4.3.2 Beneficiary targeting

Deloitte surveyed four schools within which students had received the sessions in either year 10 or year 11. When asked if they felt that this was the most beneficial age group, many students agreed that they felt the courses were delivered at the correct point in their lives. A few disagreed stating that they would have preferred the sessions at an earlier age. Interestingly, no student felt that the session would have been more beneficial had it been delayed until a later stage.

One group of year 11 students stated that they believed focusing on year 11 was “perfect” as this “was the age that many students are beginning to enter into relationships and that the issues discussed were becoming more relevant in our lives.” Students from other schools agreed that year 11 was “the right age group” and that it was good to receive this information “beforehand.” However, a minority of students who had taken the course in year 11 disagreed. They stated that they felt that course was delivered too late. One such student argued that “most people have already had sex by year 11” and that the lessons delivered may be simply an “afterthought.”

When speaking to students who attended in year 10, a different view was offered with students agreeing that they believed year 10 was an appropriate age group. Reasons for this included that “this is the age when many pupils began to think about having sex”. Although a smaller group than those receiving the course in year 11, these findings present an interesting viewpoint on the correct age at which to deliver the course.

Overall it appears that student ‘maturity’ (the ability to participate in better discussion on the issue) within individual schools will ultimately determine which age group is most suitable but that years 10 and 11 are both appropriate. Year 12 or above was considered to be on the ‘late’ side which could lead to associated consequences.

### 4.3.3 Effectiveness and impact

When assessing the impact and effectiveness of the programme, it is important to evaluate the level of information retained by the students and whether this information has had an impact on their subsequent attitude.

- **Openness and honesty – linked to rapport with peer educator:** The peer educator approach appears to leave a lasting impact on the students. The authenticity of the peer educators is a strength of the programme which resonated well with the students. Many felt a strong connection with the peer educator which helped to facilitate an environment of open communication. A variety of factors appear to contribute to this including peer educators being viewed as external from teaching staff and the fact that they dress in non-business attire. Such factors help to increase student openness and honesty which is vital in establishing real engagement on key messages from the programme.
- **Enhanced understanding of young parents** - When asked about their understanding of young parents now and if this has changed following the session, the majority of students agreed that their opinions have now altered. A theme running through the answers is that many students believed that teenage parents received an easy ride in life but that this wasn't correct. Students indicated that previously they believed teenage parents received more funding and better housing than was actually the case. Others stated that the sessions made them aware of just how easily mistakes can happen and that they should no longer judge teenage parents as they may have done in the past. Whilst the large majority of beneficiaries stated that their views had changed, a small minority of students continued to hold a negative viewpoint. These views included that all teenage parents were "immature" and that it "was silly to get pregnant so young."
- **Memorable and impactful** - The more hands on aspects of parenting, demonstrated through the interactive exercises, had an impact on the beneficiaries. Many cited that they had not previously considered how difficult getting a pram up a flight of stairs can be or how heavy a baby can be to carry.
- **Other understanding enhanced** - There is also some evidence of the sessions altering some students' views on relationships, a further benefit of the programme. For example one female pupil stated that the session made her realise that "having a baby doesn't always strengthen a relationship, like you think it would."

### 4.3.4 Future thinking – on possible improvements to the programme

The general consensus of the students was that they enjoyed the course, they found it useful and that they would like to see it continue. The beneficiary discussion on future thinking focused on ways in which the offering could be innovated or improved upon in subsequent years. Suggestions put forward included:

- Providing a leaflet or other form of takeaway containing main facts and figures from the session;
- Including the views of a child who grew up with a teenage parent to provide an alternative point of view;
- Introducing a mother into the sessions who had her first child at an older age;
- Involving a university student or a young person in full time employment to compare practicalities;
- Bringing in a parent of a young parent (the grandparent) to give a view on how their child having a baby affected the whole family;
- A follow on or a refresher course in year 12 could be helpful to reinforce the main messages;

- Merging the offering with other Straight Talking programmes such as discussion regarding career aspirations; and
- Providing a younger group of peer educators such as a pregnant female or a parent with a young toddler to provide insight into life during the early years.

Two groups suggested that they were happy with the current format and that it should not be changed.

#### 4.4 Qualitative findings: Teachers

##### 4.4.1 Delivery model

Deloitte consulted teachers from four schools which utilise the Straight Talking offering in order to assess the current delivery model. Although the model offered to each school differed, there was a high level of satisfaction with the service. Of the schools surveyed, one school offered students one session per week over five weeks, while the other three schools provided students with a single one hour session.

- **Tailored approach:** All teachers stated that the current offering suited their own school's needs. Teachers providing five week courses appreciated that students received a mix of practical and discussion sessions. Other schools that opted for the one day courses valued the fact that Straight Talking had tailored their offering to meet the needs of the school. Schools which had received a discount or a pro bono offering from Straight Talking were also grateful for this help.
- **Authentic experience of peer educators adds value:** All the teachers found that students related well to the educators and they recognised the value that first-hand experience adds to the sessions. The educators appeared to be well trained and this was evidenced by the quality of session delivery. Within two schools teachers highlighted past issues regarding timekeeping or poor delivery of the sessions, but all agreed that such issues have now been addressed and that they are happy with the current level of service. The teachers agreed that, due to their lack of relevant experience, that they could not replicate the impact of the peer educators.
- **A stand-out product:** The majority of the teachers stated that Straight Talking had identified a niche within the market, differentiating itself from its competitors. They stated that the approach provided education over and above standard PHSE offerings and that there were very little similar programmes. The teacher from Heathlands School had experience of an alternative offer (involving students caring for a virtual baby for a period of time), however he considered Straight Talking to be a stronger approach overall.

Overall the teachers had a strong level of satisfaction with the Straight Talking model.

##### 4.4.2 Beneficiary targeting

For the programme to be successful, sessions should be delivered to students who present the highest risk of teenage pregnancy. Factors that contribute to an individual being "at risk" include location, age and other more specific factors such as personal circumstances. All of the schools were perceived to be situated within teenage pregnancy hotspots<sup>6</sup> and discussions with teachers indicate that they believe the course does reach those at risk individuals.

One school stated that, in its first year with Straight Talking, it selected specific "high risk" students to only partake in the programme. The school however have since changed this approach as it led to the selected individuals feeling embarrassed and stigmatised for being chosen. Within all of the schools surveyed, the offering is provided to all students in a chosen year group, either year 10 or 11, as determined by the teachers. Teachers believed that this approach was appropriate as, due to high teenage pregnancy rates in local areas,

<sup>6</sup> The boroughs that the schools are in, can be large areas, and at the overall borough level were not all 'teenage pregnancy hotspots' according to the statistics in section 2.

all students were viewed as “at risk.” This approach ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to avail of the services.

The schools choose which year group received the session and all appeared to believe that they focus on the most appropriate school year. One teacher suggested that he believed offering the programme to year 10 enabled it to be interactive as they were mature enough to ask questions and enter discussions. He stated that students below year 10 would not have the appropriate level of maturity to engage in discussion around the subject. Others stated that year 10 and 11 was the age at which issues (such as sex education) were becoming more prevalent in the children’s lives. Similar to the student view point, no teacher suggested initially offering the course to older year groups.

Overall discussions with teachers indicate that the programme is focusing on appropriate areas and age groups and that within the schools, non-selective provision (beyond targeting a year group) avoids potential stigmatisation.

#### 4.4.3 Defining success

To assess if an offering such as Straight Talking is successful, it is important to first agree what success looks like. The teachers at the schools appeared in agreement that the success of the programme should be judged on an increase in student awareness of the related issues (including continued engagement with education) and ultimately, a reduction in teenage pregnancy rates within the school.

Whilst teachers agreed that this should be the benchmark, they conceded that it is difficult to attribute a fall (or a rise) in teenage pregnancy solely to the Straight Talking programme. The majority of schools offer complementary courses focusing on life choices alongside Straight Talking, which may also contribute to a decline in teenage pregnancy rates. The head of PHSE at Grace Academy, did share an example of Grace Academy in Darlaston where rates were once as high as 16 teenage pregnancies per year. The school at the time offered no form of sex education, and implemented a number of programmes including Straight Talking. As a direct result of this increased focus on education, the rate has now fallen to zero or one per year, for which she believes Straight Talking contributed heavily.

Teachers also believed that success can be somewhat defined by the enthusiasm of and the feedback received from students. They believe that if students are enthusiastic about the course, they are more likely to ‘engage’ and retain the key messages. The teacher from Heathlands School stated that the school provided the offering over a 12 week period with each student receiving one session. He cited examples of pupils who, after hearing about the course from their friends, approached him to ask if they will also get to participate. He viewed this eagerness as an indication of the success of the course.

#### 4.4.4 Effectiveness and impact

Of the teachers consulted all agreed that the courses did leave a lasting impression on the beneficiary students.

- **“Reality check”** - The teachers stated that one of the main impacts the course had, was to raise awareness of the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy. One teacher believed that many students were broadly aware of the basic issues surrounding teenage pregnancy but that the course offered them a sharper insight into the effort required to raise a baby which provides them with a “reality check.” The teachers agreed that the students enjoyed the courses and appeared more educated on the main issues following attendance.
- **Challenging stigma** - The teachers were of the opinion that the course effectively tackled the stigma that can surround teenage parents, by “directly challenging” any negative views students may hold regarding teenage parents and forcing them to consider their previously held beliefs. Teachers considered that this was due to pupils growing their empathy for others and abandoning any stigmatised views they may hold.

- **Life lessons that align with the curriculum** - When discussing life lessons, the teachers believed that it is important that the course outlines the constraints many young people face on their time, opportunities and finances, and takes the opportunity to reaffirm to students that it is ok to delay having sexual intercourse and that thought should be given before engaging in sexual activities. The teachers stated that the current offering helps to deliver such lessons to students. All teachers agreed that the current programme covers the core PHSE curriculum.

Overall the teachers believe that the course delivers the appropriate messages to students and effectively makes pupils aware of issues surrounding teenage pregnancy.

#### 4.4.5 Future thinking

When assessing future thinking surrounding Straight Talking offerings in schools, Deloitte assessed how schools first became aware of Straight Talking, if they would like to continue working with Straight Talking and if teachers believed that a peer educator model could be replicated in other teaching areas.

All respondents noted that Straight Talking originally initiated contact with the school. This appears to take the form of a letter addressed directly to the school or through an email containing a link to the Straight Talking website. Whilst they believe that Straight Talking offer a valuable service, some teachers stated that without Straight Talking initiating the original conversation, they would be unaware of the programme. This suggests that when expanding into other areas, Straight Talking should not depend on schools being aware of their offering and should continue to contact schools directly. The teachers believed that issues within their own schools were being faced in similar schools elsewhere who may appreciate an offering such as Straight Talking.

The teachers believed that if Straight Talking were to expand, that the model could be replicated in other areas and across other issues. Whilst they believe it to be possible, teachers stressed the importance of finding the right people with credible experience, should the peer educator model be replicated.

All of the teachers stated that they would like to continue their relationship with Straight Talking. They appeared happy with the level of service received with one teacher describing the lessons delivered as “crucial.” Despite this many teachers highlighted that availability of funding for the Straight Talking programme was a major issue and that this was something that was outside of their control.

Overall the teachers were pleased with the quality of the programme and would like to continue their relationship.

## 4.5 Qualitative findings: Peer educators

This section summarises the qualitative feedback from two focus groups with peer educators – one with five peer educators and one with four peer educators.

### 4.5.1 Delivery model

The peer educators were very positive as to the delivery model. They highlighted the following factors as key to the success of the model:

- **Preparation** - The peer educators agreed that the training programme of two full days of training, the opportunity to do sessions in the office, followed by two classroom sessions as observers and two classroom sessions delivered in tandem with an experienced peer educator was strong preparation before going out to deliver sessions solo. They noted the training had been extended (e.g. number of sessions observed) and considered this to have strengthened the model, helping ensure that they as a peer educator group were more consistent in their delivery;

- Authenticity – the peer educators all highlighted that having real life experience helped to give them credibility and to create a level of respect among the students when they told them their story and used their first-hand experience to communicate messages;
- Independent - “I am not a teacher...the ‘peer educator’ concept works.” The peer educators described that they were seen as different to teachers. They said they “got respect, but in a different way to a teacher”. Their age, dress (“I don’t look like a teacher”), language (“I understand their slang”) and informality brought them closer to students and created a level of openness and confidence among the students demonstrated through their willingness to engage, ask questions and say things “they wouldn’t have said to teachers”
- Mixed gender teams - The opportunity to work together as a male and female peer educator team was considered particularly strong. This allowed for discussion of different perspectives on teenage pregnancy, creating a different dynamic in discussions within classrooms (“boys gravitate to the young dads”), and role modelled a positive male – female relationship (“that wasn’t boyfriend – girlfriend”);
- Materials - The core material were considered to be strong. They are well tried and tested and give the peer educators confidence when delivering the course. The design of the material is fun, interactive (e.g. ‘shop till you drop’) and helps the peer educators draw the students into the discussion;

The five week programme was preferred to the single session. A key difference was the opportunity to build up rapport and trust with the students allowing more frank and open discussions. When asked whether the one session model was effective, they said they would still be able to communicate the core messages.

#### **4.5.2 Beneficiary targeting**

Peer educators stated that, within the classroom sessions, young people needed to be able to engage with the subject matter for it to be meaningful. They also observed that maturity levels between schools did vary when discussing matters such as sex. The current focus on pupils (boys and girls) at the year 10 or year 11 age range was considered reasonable.

#### **4.5.3 Effectiveness and impact**

The delivery model was considered by peer educators to be key to the effectiveness of the course, namely: the use of peer educators, with authentic first-hand experience and quality core material. This created a space in which “pupils engaged enthusiastically”.

The impact of the session was evident as:

- The pupils gave direct feedback saying they were surprised by how much they had learned;
- There were big changes in the stereotypical views expressed at the outset compared to at the end of the sessions;
- The questions the pupils asked were considered evidence of how curious the young people were on this issue and the extent to which they were engaging with it in the workshops (“asking questions they wouldn’t ask teachers”).

#### **4.5.4 Future thinking**

Looking forward the suggestions from peer educators included:

- A greater focus on retaining and growing the pool of young dads who participate<sup>7</sup> as peer educators (This is often a challenge based on the seasonal nature of the work compared to other job opportunities and due to how the benefit system differentiates the resident parent [usually mums] from the non-resident carer [usually dads]);
- Increased networking of peer educators (“some peer educators meet for the first time when delivering sessions at schools” and “it would be an opportunity to give feedback and learn from each other’s experiences”);
- The use of PowerPoint presentations to make the session more visual. However this recommendation was not supported by everyone due to a reluctance to rely on technology. One suggestion was made to put the objectives for the session on a PowerPoint slide and to refer to these during the session;
- The involvement of young people in a project e.g. a drama project which could embed some of the learning?

#### 4.6 Summary of Quantitative and Qualitative findings

Putting the quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation data together indicates that the model applied by Straight Talking is effective and has an immediate and sustained impact on young people’s views and understanding of teenage pregnancy.

The qualitative data from pupils, teachers and peer educators is extremely positive. It reinforces the stand-out design and delivery of the Straight Talking Peer Education model. The characteristics that are central to creating this stand-out are:

- The preparation of the peer-educators, in terms of their training and the confidence that they can deliver an impactful session on a potentially difficult subject;
- The delivery by peer-educators using their authentic first-hand experience;
- The inclusion of male and female peer-educators in the delivery team; and
- The quality of the interactive, memorable content which can stimulate and engage the pupils.

Any improvements that could be made are marginal design issues which the team could give consideration to. One constraint that is more apparent relates to schools choosing a single session rather than a five week programme. It has not been possible in this research to assess the difference in terms of impact, however we are aware that most of the material and feedback indicated that a five week programme was preferable.

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of evaluation there were five male peer educators out of 27.

# 5. Sustainability and commerciality: Growing the model?

## 5.1 Overview of Straight Talking Funding

### 5.1.1 Funding

As for many charities of this scale the funding streams potentially available to Straight Talking do not all align neatly and the organisation has to operate on a cocktail of funding streams with varying timelines, scale and restrictions.

Funding streams for Straight Talking include:

- Local authorities – funding may be available from local authorities on an application basis however we were informed that a significant proportion of ‘grant units in local authorities where Straight Talking operates have been closed down. This reduces the overall funding available to the charity by effectively closing down a specific income stream.
- Individual and organisational donors – donations are recorded by donor and for reporting purposes can be categorised into two groups – under £1.5k and over £1.5k. We understand that within the under £1.5k group there are approximately 5 – 8 donations each year that have restrictions attached. In any cases with restrictions notes are made on the general ledger and the Deputy CEO is informed. The Deputy CEO updates the Salesforce sales targets so that restrictions can be monitored.

The majority of funding comes from “trusts and foundations.” Straight Talking have several long term funders including the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Henry Smith Charity. Both charities will soon be entering their final year of funding. Other long term donors include the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, the Wessex Youth Trust and the Peacock Trust.

As part of our engagement we considered the profile of anticipated funding going forward. We noted that the charity had received a significant level of funding from the Big Lottery Fund which will allow the charity to reconsider its targets and models of delivery. Furthermore, some significant funding streams were only recently awarded at the time of our engagement and will continue in the short-medium term, such as Comic Relief funding of £40k p.a. until 2018.

- Income from courses - Straight Talking can also generate income through delivery (i.e. schools are charged a set price per course and the remaining costs are covered from external funders/donations). If a school falls within a ‘target’ borough for the charity, discounted prices can be made available. For schools falling outside of these target areas full price will be charged. If the School is located in a subsidised area the courses can be provided for no cost to the School. Teachers consulted within this research were positive about how Straight Talking would discount their fee in order to maintain services to schools for which their PSHE budgets were being reduced. This model suggests a balancing act between a quasi-commercial approach and the desire to provide the service to pupils in the schools that need it most (regardless of whether or not they are in position to pay).

We understand that there are other funding streams that the charity has considered which were not deemed appropriate for the organisation in its current position, for example funding from Social Impact Bonds, which currently don't offer a funding stream with a remit applicable to Straight Talking. The European Social Fund and commissioning from local authorities has also been considered but has been deemed unlikely due to the small scale of Straight Talking.

### **5.1.2 Staff Costs**

A significant proportion of the charity's expenditure relates to staff costs as the charity employs its beneficiaries as peer educators while also employing a dedicated mentor for them. In the 2014/15 financial year, 75.2% of staff costs were direct charitable activities. Sessional peer educators receive £13.50 an hour for delivery of sessions and minimum wage, plus travel expenses for training and development. Part time staff working on 16 hour per week contracts receive the London living wage of £9.40 an hour. Full time employees earn £21k p.a. which is considered to provide a breakeven position for staff paying for full time childcare. These employees are also provided with employment benefits such as a zone 1-6 travel card, at a current cost of £227 a month. The positions filled by full time staff provide experience in key business areas such as management and sales.

### **5.1.3 Management Information System**

Given the complexity of its funding base, Straight Talking has in place an appropriate funding management information system ('SalesForce') which records all funding data with each individual funder holding a separate data record. Restrictions may be attached to funding by the individual funders (for example, the funding can only be used to support the provision of sessions in a particular geographical area). These restrictions are 'attached' to each SalesForce data record for information purposes and to ensure compliance with the restrictions. Where any additional funding is received following the original budget process, a manual update is made to the budget allocation to flex the financial resource limit available.

The management information system is also now collating data on service delivery and beneficiary monitoring data. Indeed this will be the first academic year in which all the monitoring data will be collated onto one system. While this system has only been implemented relatively recently, it provides a strong basis for capturing the output and outcome data that is critical for management, but also for external stakeholders including potential funders and service buyers / recipients.

## **5.2 Sustainability through replicating and growing the model?**

### **5.2.1 Is there a need? Despite a declining rate of teenage pregnancy, targeted interventions are still needed**

The overall trend in terms of teenage pregnancy in England and Wales is downwards and this is to be welcomed. That said the evidence highlights three reasons which indicate there is still a need for intervention:

- In different parts of the country, teenage pregnancy is still a significant issue. As Figure 3.2 (the under 18 conception rates in 2013) illustrates there are significant variations in rates of conception;
- Sex and relationships education requires improvement in over a third of schools and the need continues to evolve<sup>8</sup>. Straight Talking has now added a two session module that covers healthy relationships, grooming, coercion, sexual exploitation, sexting and the legalities of indecent material online. This session has been launched in response to changing need highlighted in the Ofsted report 'Not yet good enough: personal, social, health and economic education in schools in 2012'; and

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<sup>8</sup> The charity regularly consults the teenage parents about the material delivered in schools that keeps the delivery fresh and relevant. This is the way we are able to keep abreast of new trends that need to be addressed.

- There is an enhanced policy focus on preventing young people becoming NEETs and finding pathways out of being NEET.

### 5.2.2 Is Straight Talking in a position to replicate?

It is clear that the organisation has taken steps to put itself in a stronger position to grow and replicate its model. Aside from the organisation's significant experience and the development and refinement of its stand-out 'product' over many years, it has recently developed a Standard Operations Manual, describing in detail its standard processes and procedures.

This is an important document for sustaining the quality and consistency of the model and its implementation within the current, core organisation, even through periods of change (e.g. staff or management). It could also become the bedrock for securing the fidelity of the programme if it was extended elsewhere (e.g. to a teenage pregnancy hotspot). An organisation that has codified a core intervention in such a manner would also build confidence in potential funders and stakeholders.

It is noted that Straight Talking has already extended its geographic reach to the West Midlands and are currently raising funds to establish this work on a more sustainable basis. Given the list of potential areas in which one could, at a high level, identify as having challenges relating to teenage pregnancy (e.g. Birmingham, Newcastle, Manchester, Portsmouth, Cardiff) how would it apply its experience (including its service delivery in the West Midlands) and networks to decide on where to target and how to establish a service there, for example via a satellite office?

Beyond looking to replicate or grow in relation to its teenage pregnancy prevention work, it is also possible that the model it uses could be applicable in different circumstances. These have included:

- The provision of education services to offenders currently located within the UK Prison Service. For example Straight Talking completed a pilot project delivering a bespoke curriculum at Oakhill Youth Offenders Institute for boys in May 2016. The pilot was deemed a success and Oakhill have indicated they would like to have Straight Talking back to deliver again in the next academic year. That said, we understand that the security clearances required to enter such locations have made it difficult to expand in this area;
- To date the charity has very much focused on teenage pregnancies but recognises that as technology changes the risks encountered by young people has evolved. For example, as mentioned in the previous section, Straight Talking have now added a two session module that covers healthy relationships, grooming, coercion, sexual exploitation, sexting and the legalities of indecent material online.

# 6. Final analysis and overall conclusion

## 6.1 Final analysis against key questions

- Is there any evidence of Straight Talking providing useful knowledge which would change the perception of programme beneficiaries regarding teenage parenthood?

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research show that beneficiary perceptions have changed following the programme. This is evidenced by an increase in beneficiaries stating that it would be very difficult to be a teenage parent and 100% of students stating that it would be challenging to have a baby within the next two years. When discussing the programme with beneficiaries, they confirmed that as a result of the course they have more understanding about the issues surrounding teenage pregnancy. The change is both in the immediate aftermath of the programme and was found to be sustained in participants one year after their participation.

- Do the sessions provided give important life lessons and change the outlook of programme beneficiaries?

Discussions with both beneficiaries and teachers confirmed that the course provided life lessons that have changed students' perspective on the issue. Students said that the programme tackled many of the myths that can surround teenage pregnancy, especially regarding finance, benefits and relationships. The teachers agreed that the course provided students with a "reality check" and provided them with useful lessons which they can carry with them.

- Does Straight Talking challenge discrimination / perception of young parents amongst your targeted stakeholders?

Almost all students agreed that the programme has changed their perceptions of young parents. While several said they had previously held a negative view, students stated that subsequent to the Straight Talking programme, they could better relate to a young parent and the challenges they face. Teachers agreed stating that the programme effectively tackles the stigma attached to teenage parents by "directly challenging" any negatively held view points.

- Do Straight Talking beneficiaries consider peer education to provide an effective model of communication?

The authentic first-hand experience of the peer educators employed by Straight Talking, was credible and compelling to students. Students felt that Straight Talking provided them with a view of what life is really like following the birth of a child, an insight which can be difficult to obtain elsewhere. They enjoyed the approach of using peer educators and felt that they delivered the sessions better than a teacher would have. Teachers all agreed with this. Our analysis would highlight that the peer-educator employees were also well trained and were using tried and tested approaches to unpacking key issues and messages within the classroom. The effectiveness of the peer-educator in communicating is therefore interlinked with the high quality of the messages and supporting material they were applying.

- Is it useful for Straight Talking programmes to have both male and female peer educators leading sessions?

The majority of students surveyed had not received a session from a male peer educator, although those who had, considered this a strength of the Straight Talking programme. They stated that this was "interesting" and provided a "different side of parenthood". The peer

educators (male and female) found that the male peer educators created a different dynamic and helped open up discussion with a wider range of pupils than if it had been a female peer educator. For some, including teachers, the male peer educator was a positive surprise. Those students who had not received a session conducted by a male, all agreed that they would have liked to have had this opportunity.

- Which age group provides the most tangible evidence of impact across all of the above?

The findings from our research suggests that the key to understanding this relates to maturity in terms of the subject matter. If the students are not of an age to engage with the subject matter it will neither be meaningful or impactful. If students are already sexually active, then it may be too late. There is an appropriate window of opportunity to run the programme. Peer educators contested that an age group in a school in a particular area might work well, while being too late for another school in another area. In this study years 10 and 11 students received and benefited from the programme. There was no apparent differentiation in the impact among the students engaged across these two year groups.

- Is the peer education model itself sustainable for the planned future growth of Straight Talking? Does the commerciality of Straight Talking support this growth?

The peer educator approach is central to the model. Teachers could easily deliver the messages, however the authenticity of the peer educators provides a stand-out feature which alongside the quality interactive content, creates memorable and impactful sessions for the students. There are also strong outcomes for the peer educators, not least their self-development, employment and enhanced future employability. The sustainability of the model is a challenge. This is most apparent in the cocktail of funding required and secondly in the need to regularly replenish and train the peer educator pool. The evidence indicates that the wider funding mix is subsidising the peer education service in schools (who regularly spoke of being unable to afford the service without a discount). Therefore future growth of the peer educator model, unless it was operated on a different commercial basis (which the schools engaged with in this research would have been unable to afford), would continue to rely on a wider funding mix. Market research (e.g. in potential target geographies) would further inform the viability of operating it on a more commercial basis.

## 6.2 Overall conclusion

Putting the quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation data together indicates that the model applied by Straight Talking is effective and has an immediate and sustained impact on young people's views and understanding of teenage pregnancy.

The qualitative data from pupils, teachers and peer educators is extremely positive. It reinforces the stand-out design and delivery of the Straight Talking Peer Education model. The characteristics that are central to creating this stand-out are:

- The preparation of the peer-educators in terms of their training and the confidence that they can deliver an impactful session on a potentially difficult subject;
- The delivery by peer-educators with authentic first-hand experience;
- The inclusion of male and female peer-educators in the delivery team;
- The quality of the interactive, memorable content which can stimulate and engage the pupils.

There are some issues which need continued focus (e.g. recruitment and retention of male peer educators) and some potential constraints (schools wanting one single session rather than a programme of five) however the model is fundamentally sound.

Straight Talking's years of experience, programme development and delivery and the development of standardised programmes and processes which have been codified in the standard operations manual, combined with the need for such an intervention (based on rates of teenage conception, the poor quality of sex education in a significant majority of

schools, and the need for tailored support for the interlinked challenges of teenage pregnancy and NEET status) do suggest positive potential for geographic growth.

A detailed growth plan informed by market testing with potential service recipients should be developed. The commerciality of growing the model is challenging. Investment would be needed to extend (e.g. via a satellite office) to a new region. Potential buyers (e.g. schools) are increasingly cash-strapped. The growth plan would therefore need to give consideration to the funding plan. The growth plan could become the basis for discussion with existing or potential third party funders (e.g. Big Lottery Fund or local authorities).

# Appendix 1: Evaluation contributors

## **Straight Talking Staff Team**

**CEO - Hilary Pannack**

**Deputy CEO – Rebecca Farmer**

**Finance Officer – Angela Crawford**

Two Peer Educator Focus Groups (1 focus group with five peer educators, 1 focus group with four peer educators)

The following teachers contributed to our evaluation of the Straight Talking programme:

- Mel Harper, PSHE session organiser at Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls, Ealing;
- John Hamill, Head of PSHE at Robert Clack Upper School, Dagenham;
- Sarah Bartlett, Head of PSHE at Grace Academy, Solihull; and
- Chris Walsgrove, PSHE teacher at Heathlands School, Hounslow.

In addition, Deloitte obtained input from the following number of pupils:

- 11 x year 12 pupils at Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls, Ealing;
- 4 x year 11, 3 x year 12 and 4 x year 13 pupils at Robert Clack Upper School, Dagenham;
- 9 x year 12 pupils at Grace Academy, Solihull; and
- 10 x year 11 pupils at Heathlands School, Hounslow.

# Appendix 2: Conception rates

## London Conception Rates

London itself sits just below the UK average conception rate, with an under-18 conception rate of 21.5 (per thousand) in 2014. However, 9 of the 32 London boroughs had rates well above the national average. The fieldwork for this report was carried out at three schools in three boroughs in London, namely Barking and Dagenham, Ealing and Hounslow. Each of these areas have been discussed in more detail below.

## Barking and Dagenham

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is an outer London borough situated around 9 miles east of Central London. The borough had the highest under-18 and under-16 conception rate per 1,000 women in all of London in 2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). One of the key aims in Barking and Dagenham Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (NHS Barking and Dagenham Clinical Commissioning Group and London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 2015) is to improve Sexual Health amongst adolescents. The strategy sets out objectives to 'Empower adolescents to make informed choices about their sexual and emotional health' and that 'more adolescents are protected through contraceptive and sexual health services'.

Figure 7.1 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 15 – 17 for the borough of Barking and Dagenham compared to all London boroughs from 2005-2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). It shows that the conception rate for the borough has consistently sat above the London average. The rate of conception has been reducing and in 2014 it was around half of that in 2005 (64.2 per thousand then compared to 32.4 per thousand in 2014). This has been similar to the movement in the overall London average. The biggest year-on-year fall in the period occurred between 2011 (when the rate was 46.3 per thousand) and 2012 (when the rate was 35.4 per thousand).

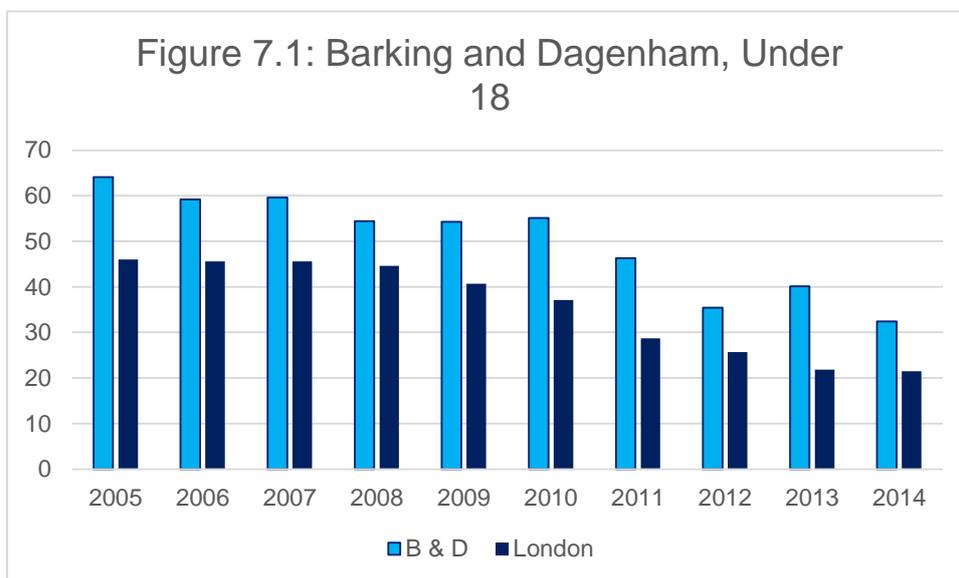
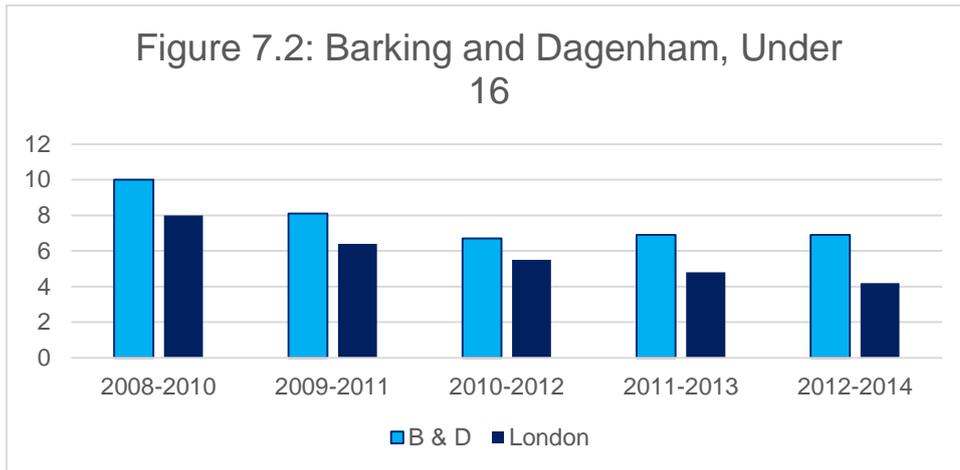


Figure 7.2 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 13-15 for the borough. It also illustrates the conception rate for all London boroughs (using 3 year averages over the period 2008-2014). The London overall rate has fallen by roughly 50% (8 per thousand in 2008-10 to 4.2 per thousand in 2012-14), which has been similar to the fall in the under-18 rate, over the same period (44.6 per thousand in 2008 to 21.5 per thousand in 2014). The decrease in the conception rate of 13-15 years olds for the borough of Barking and Dagenham has been less over the time period, only dropping by 31% in the period (from 10 per thousand in 2008-10 to 6.9 per thousand in 2012-14). The rate has also remained relatively constant from 2010 to 2014, despite a fall of 24% in the overall London rate for all boroughs.



### Ealing

The London Borough of Ealing is situated in West London. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest London Borough in population, and 11<sup>th</sup> largest in size, covering parts of west London and a small part of North West London. The 2014 mid-year population estimate for Ealing was 342,100 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Life expectancy, and the teenage pregnancy rate in Ealing are better than the national average.

Figure 7.3 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 15-17 for the borough of Ealing compared to all London boroughs from 2005 – 2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2015). This shows that whilst the conception rate for the borough has consistently sat below the London average, the number of conceptions for 2014 was around half of that in 2005 (33.9 per thousand then compared to 17.8 per thousand in 2014) which has been similar to the movement in the overall London average. The biggest year-on-year fall in the period occurred between 2009 (when the rate was 31 per thousand) and 2010 (when the rate was 22.8 per thousand).

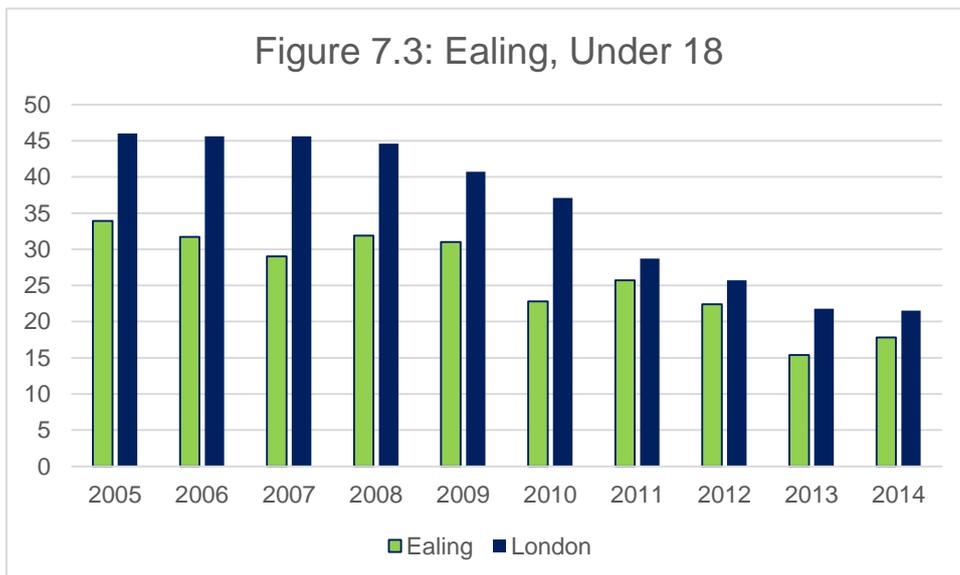
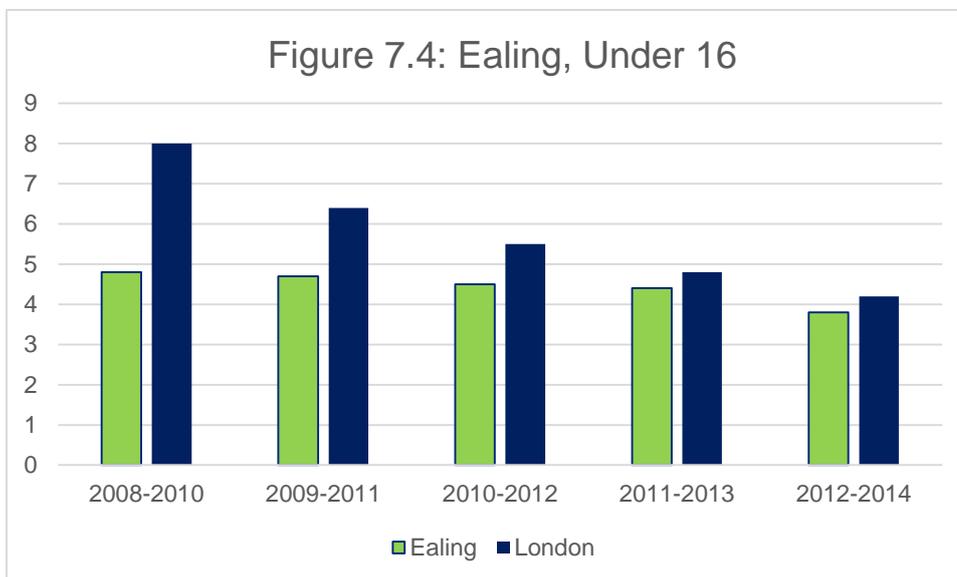


Figure 7.4 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 13-15 whose usual residence is Ealing against the conception rate for all London boroughs (using 3 year averages over the period 2008-2014). As noted the London overall rate has fallen by roughly 50% over the period. The conception rate of 13-15 years olds for the borough of Ealing has reduced by 26% in the period (from 4.8 per thousand in 2008-10 to 3.8 per thousand in 2012-14). The lowest conception rate in the period was the most recent; 2012-14.



### Hounslow

The London Borough of Hounslow is situated in West London forming part of Outer London. The borough stretches from near Central London in the east to the border with Surrey in the west, covering Chiswick, Brentford, Isleworth and Feltham. Since 2001, Hounslow's population has grown by 19.6% from 212,342 to 253,957. While this is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest growth in Greater London, the borough has only moved from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> largest borough.

Figure 7.5 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 15 – 17 for the borough of Hounslow compared to all London boroughs from 2005 – 2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). It shows that whilst the conception rate for the borough was slightly lower than the London average from 2005 – 2010, from 2011 onwards the rate for the borough has sat above the London average and has remained that way ever since. It is worth noting that both rates have decreased over the period; the conception rate for all London boroughs has just decreased at a higher rate.

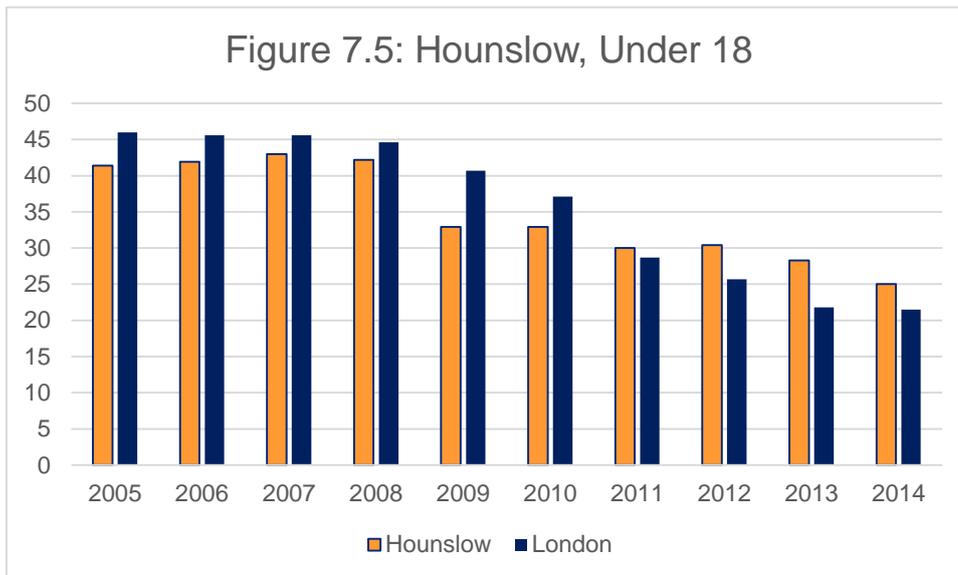
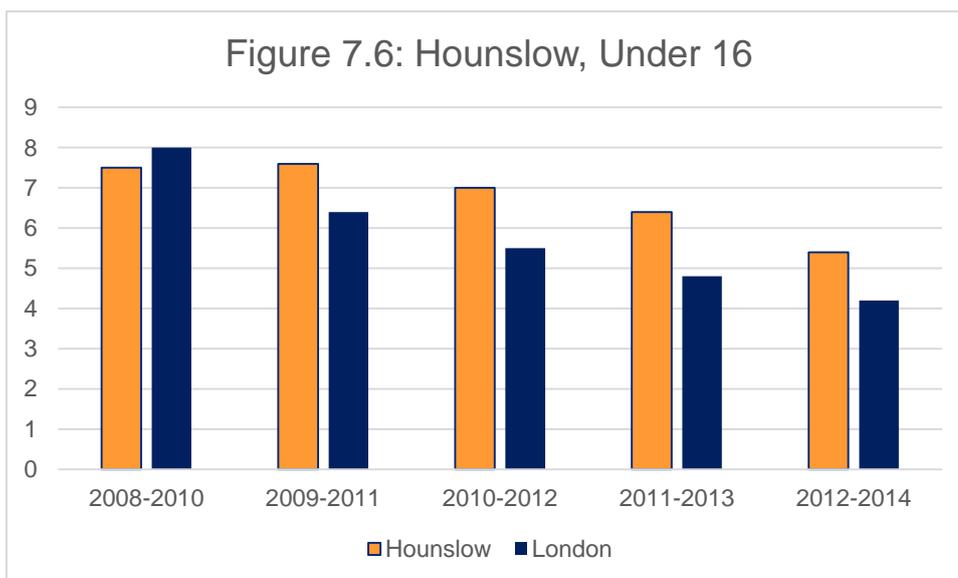


Figure 7.6 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 13-15 for the Hounslow Borough against all London boroughs (using 3 year averages over the period 2008-2014). Similarly to Barking and Dagenham, and Ealing, the decrease in the conception rate of 13-15 years olds for the borough of Hounslow has been slower than the decrease in the overall London average over the time period, dropping by 39% (from 7.5 per thousand in 2008-10 to 5.4 per thousand in 2012-14).



### West Midlands Conception Rates

In 2014, the West Midlands region sat marginally above the UK average with an under-18 conception rate of 26.5 (per thousand). This resulted in an additional 3.6 conceptions, on average, for every thousand girls in the area; this difference has remained relatively constant, at around 4, since 2008. Some of the fieldwork for this report was carried out in the Solihull area of the West Midlands.

### Solihull

Solihull is a large town in the West Midlands with a population of 206,700 in the 2011 Census. In November 2013, the uSwitch Quality of Life Index named Solihull the 'best place to live' in the UK. (Hassan, 2013). There are low mortality rates, high life expectancy (81 for men and 84 for women) and cheaper car insurance premiums of around £528 per year.

Figure 7.7 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 15 – 17 for Solihull compared to the West Midlands from 2005 – 2014 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). It shows that whilst the conception rate for Solihull decreased from 2005-2006 (from 35.6 per thousand to 32.6 thousand) it increased again in 2007 to 40.3 per thousand and then continued in a downward trend to 16.7 per thousand in 2014.

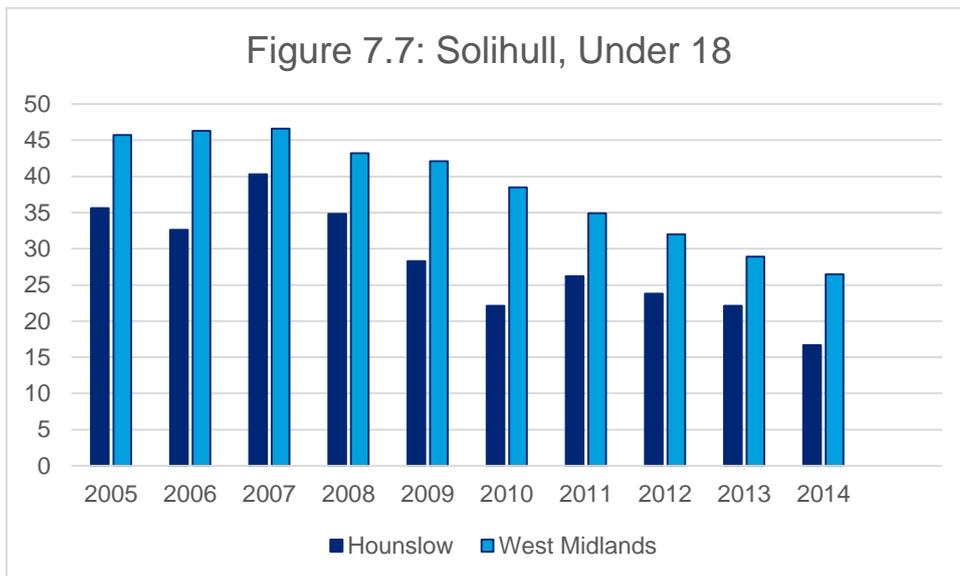
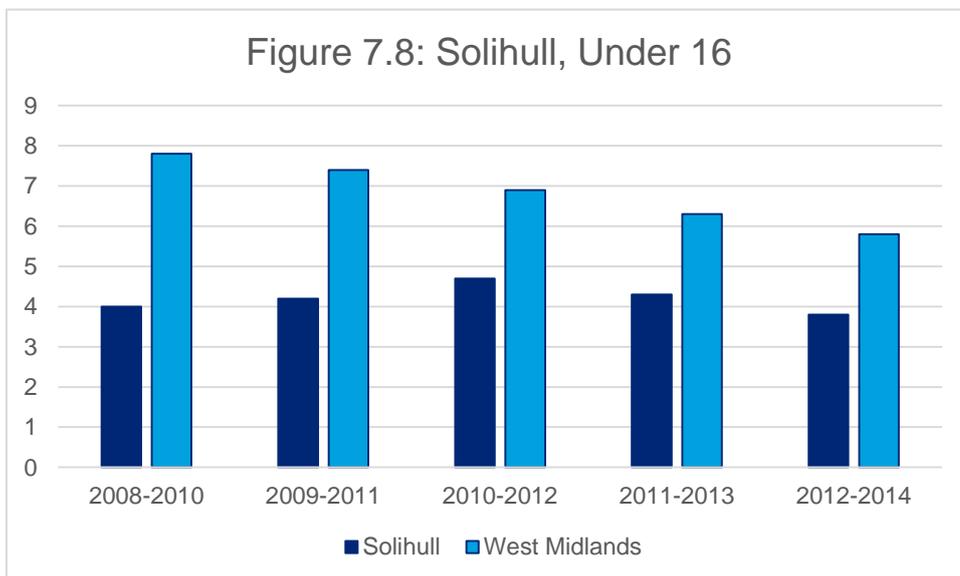


Figure 7.8 below shows the conception rates per 1000 of the female population aged 13-15 whose usual residence is Solihull. It also illustrates the conception rate for West Midlands (using 3 year averages over the period 2008-2014). The West Midlands overall rate has fallen by roughly 34% (7.8 per thousand in 2008-10 to 5.8 per thousand in 2012-14). Conversely, the decrease in the conception rate of 13-15 year olds for Solihull has remained relatively constant, around 4.2, over the entire period.



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