



**REVIEW
OF
THE YOUNG PARENTS' PROGRAMME
BY THE
SCHOOLS' INSPECTORATE**

17th - 21st September 2007

LEAD REVIEWER: PACHENT SMYTHE



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Information about the programme and the review team:

Age range of participants:	Current participants range from 15 years to 19 years, but programme is open to women aged 14 to 24 years
Gender of participants:	Female, although young male parents are encouraged to attend
Number on roll:	14
Centre address:	Joyce Hylton Family Life Centre, 246 North Church Street George Town
Name of programme coordinator:	Brenda Dawkins
Name of programme manager:	Debbie Webb
Government department:	Department of Children and Family Services, Ministry of Health and Human Services

The review team

Lead evaluator:	Pachent Smythe	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate
Team evaluator:	Caroline Dawes	Cayman Islands Schools' Inspectorate

Background Information

Scope of this review

This report is part of a multi-disciplinary review of the Young Parents' Programme (YPP). The Schools' Inspectorate was asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational aspects of the programme.

The following terms of reference were provided:

- How is the curriculum relevant to the needs of the participants?
- How is the curriculum planned, organized and managed to meet the needs of the individual participants?
- To what extent does the curriculum provide equality of access and opportunity to participants to learn and achieve well?
- How is the academic progress of each participant assessed by the programme (evaluation and tracking of individual achievements and progress)?
- How many participants completed the programme between July 1994 and December 2006 / beyond?
- How many participants returned and completed their high school education?
- How many participants completed tertiary education or are enrolled in tertiary education?

In addition, the team evaluated:

- How effective are arrangements for supporting and guiding the participants and caring for their welfare and personal development?
- How well is the educational programme led and managed in terms of the curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning and welfare?

The review focused on educational provision for pregnant teenagers and school-age mothers on Grand Cayman. The team did not review provision for young women on the Sister Islands. Current participants are all from government schools. The team did not investigate policies and practice in private schools.

The review

The review of the Young Parents' Programme took place from the 17th to the 21st of September, 2007. It was carried out by Pachent Smythe and Caroline Dawes, both senior inspectors from the Schools' Inspectorate. The programme follows an academic year and the review took place in the third week of the first term. Although some participants enrolled in the previous term, many had only just started. Some programmes, particularly those that depend on volunteers and other agencies, were not properly up and running.

During the week's visit, the team:

- Observed lessons taught by the resident teacher and visiting professionals
- Gathered information about the participants, their welfare and support
- Observed how the centre is organized and managed

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- Examined the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning
- Gathered information about staffing, professional development, accommodation and resources
- Talked with staff about their roles, links with the community and other agencies
- Talked with participants
- Talked to a few of the participants' parents
- Talked with participants who had returned to school
- Interviewed senior pastoral staff at John Gray High School and the George Hicks Campus
- Interviewed the truancy officer from the Department of Education Services.

Restrictions

The judgements contained in this report should not play any part in performance management of individuals.

Executive Summary

The Young Parents' Programme (YPP) caters for pregnant women and parents between the ages of 14 and 24 years. Currently there are fourteen participants, all women, between the ages of 15 and 19 years. The programme provides a haven for young pregnant women and teenage mothers to meet and provide each other with mutual support. It is a valuable service for young women who can otherwise feel excluded and rejected by school and society.

The coordinator treats all of the participants with care and respect, often in difficult circumstances, and enables many of them to improve their self esteem. She is very committed to the work of the programme and is understanding of the young women's emotional needs and supportive of their welfare. Her empathetic approach is a key strength of the programme and the participants rely on her greatly.

Once students leave the programme, the coordinator and teacher continue to make themselves available to those who would like support with their school work, help with a résumé or just a quiet place to study. For some women, the centre provides a refuge where they know they will receive help and support. Some participants take part in work experience during the programme, which is often a successful way of helping them find employment.

There are serious shortcomings in the leadership of the programme which prevents it from moving forward. A lack of clarity about the leadership roles and responsibilities of the coordinator and the programme manager contributes to shortcomings in the way the programme is monitored and in how staff are managed. Although the Young Parents' Programme has admirable aims detailed in its clear brochure, the programme is not organised well enough and there are insufficient resources, including suitably qualified staff, to effectively fulfil the stated objectives.

The educational provision is particularly poor for school-age mothers and pregnant schoolgirls, as it does not allow them to continue with their education at an appropriate level, nor does it prepare them well enough for childbirth or parenthood.

Young women are effectively excluded from the government high school on becoming pregnant and no plan is made to help them continue with their education and sit their CXC examinations. There is no effective liaison between the programme and the high school to enable continuity of education provision and a smooth transition back to school.

The curriculum at the YPP is delivered in a 'one size fits all' way that does not meet the participants' diverse needs. The aspects of the curriculum relating to health and parenting do not cater well for participants' different stages of pregnancy. The academic programme is inflexible and does not take into account students' starting points. Too much of the content is pitched at a primary age-level and very little progress is made by students on the course.

Some of the young women who enrol at the centre would benefit from the support of a professional counsellor. Some are victims of non-consensual relations or of exploitation by men much older than themselves. Most of the young women at the centre need to be helped to develop a greater sense of self-worth, to be aware of their rights, especially

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regarding healthy relationships, and to leave the programme with more control over their lives.

What the programme does well

- The centre is a haven for some of the participants, where they receive emotional and financial support and can meet others in similar circumstances.
- The coordinator treats all of the young women with a great deal of respect and care. She is understanding and supportive of participants' emotional needs and their general welfare.
- The staff are very committed to the work of the programme.
- There is a desire on the part of the leadership to see improvements.
- There are clear and appropriate goals for the programme.
- Some young women are given good support in seeking employment.

What needs to improve

- The curriculum, which is not relevant and does not cater for the needs of young pregnant women and teenage mothers
- The participants' access to facilities and resources that will help them continue their high school education
- The participants' access to facilities and resources to support their maternity and parenting needs
- The quality of teaching, which does not always meet the needs of individual students
- The leadership of the programme to ensure progress towards stated goals
- Provision for better support and guidance and opportunities for participants to improve their personal development
- Links with other agencies

Recommendations

The following are suggested ways in which the Young Parents' Programme could try to address the weaknesses identified above as 'what needs to improve'. They are not intended to be mandatory.

1. In order to improve the curriculum, which is not relevant and does not cater for the needs of young pregnant women and teenage mothers, the centre should:

- Seek advice from the Department of Education Services in curriculum design
- Design a curriculum that provides a 'rolling' programme of key sessions relating to pregnancy, child birth and child care
- Enable access to internet resources and recommend useful websites
- Include some planned physical activity appropriate to individuals' stages of pregnancy
- Identify courses that can be studied over a six month period and which lead to accreditation, either locally (for example the Red Cross) or internationally (for example City and Guilds basic skills courses)

2. In order to improve the participants' access to facilities and resources that will help them continue their high school education:

- Students should not be excluded from school for being pregnant.
- Participants of school age should be able to continue with their school courses.
- Tutorial support for self-study should be available for those students continuing with their school work, as opposed to the current teacher-led model.
- The centre should purchase age-appropriate educational resources.

3. In order to improve the participants' access to facilities and resources to support their maternity and parenting needs, the centre should:

- Establish close links with the Health Services Authority and plan to enrol the participants in parent craft classes
- Provide transport to parent craft classes at the hospital
- Purchase resources about pregnancy, child birth and parenting, including magazines and posters
- Have a dedicated midwife in liaison with the Health Services Authority
- Develop parenting skills courses in conjunction with the National Parenting Programme that run on a rolling programme to ensure that all participants develop essential skills, knowledge and understanding.

4. In order to improve the quality of teaching so that it meets the needs of individual students:

- The centre should identify the needs of individual students when they enrol, through interviews and in liaison with the school.
- Participants should have individual education plans detailing their parent craft programme, YPP modules on pregnancy, child birth and child care, school work and any other accredited courses the centre makes available.
- The programme should be designed so that it is student-centred rather than teacher-centred, involving self-study rather than lesson delivery.
- Tutorial support should be offered to help school-age students with their school work.
- Courses delivered by outside agencies (for example, business studies and health studies) should be planned in advance and delivered by established professionals each year.

5. In order to improve the leadership of the programme, to ensure progress towards stated goals the Department of Children and Family Services should:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the management at all levels of the YPP
- Develop effective systems, including data collection and analysis, for monitoring the quality of the programme and which encourage accountability
- Develop a system of regular self-evaluation and development planning
- Develop a staffing structure that enables the aims of the programme to be met

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- Set up a steering committee consisting of representatives from the agencies involved.
- 6. In order to improve the provision for better support and guidance for the young women and opportunities for them to improve their personal development:**
- The centre should have a resident counsellor and easy access to the services of a behaviour analyst or psychologist, and midwife.
 - The centre should develop a clear code of conduct to ensure that all staff treat the young women with respect and in a non-judgemental way.
 - There should be closer inter-agency working between the centre and adolescent mental health services.
- 7. In order to improve the links with other agencies:**
- The centre should be pro-active in developing links with the high school, hospital, social workers, police etc.
 - The Department of Education Services should be more closely involved in the work of the programme.
- 8. Other recommendations:**
- The programme needs an administrative assistant.
 - The programme would benefit from a review of the social worker arrangements for participants, in particular the possibility of a single link between YPP and social services.
 - The age range of targeted participants should be reviewed and the relationship of YPP to the National Parenting Programme clarified.
 - The programme should establish firm links with the Women's Resource Centre to benefit from support they can provide.
 - The programme should not be planned around an academic year but should be year-round and designed in such a way that participants can enrol at any time and still have access to the same essential courses.
 - Strengthen multi-agency working to the extent that some aspects of the work of YPP are included in other agencies outputs, for example, education and health.

Findings in relation to the terms of reference:

- 1. How is the curriculum relevant to the needs of the participants? How is it planned, organized and managed to meet the needs of the individual participants? To what extent does the curriculum provide equality of access and opportunity to participants to learn and achieve well?**

Currently the curriculum offered by the Young Parents' Programme has admirable aims, but in practice it does not meet the needs of the students. It is not well organized and managed and does not provide equality of access and opportunity for all students.

There are many factors in play which contribute to this judgement.

Links with John Gray High School

There is no effective system of enabling young women to continue with their school work once they find out they are pregnant. Although in theory work is passed from the school to YPP, this only happens in exceptional circumstances. In most cases the young women miss school work and either have to repeat a year, or, more often than not, abandon their schooling. Currently there is nobody at the school or the centre responsible for arranging the transfer of work.

Staffing at YPP

It is difficult for the YPP to deliver their intended curriculum with the current staffing. The programme depends too much on the good will of volunteers. Although the input from some of the volunteers is good, most notably that from the National Parenting Programme, too much is of an ad hoc nature and is not well-planned. There is only one teacher responsible for delivering the 'academic' programme and although she is very well-meaning she cannot meet the diverse needs of all the students.

Planning

The young women who use the services are different abilities and ages (at the time of the review aged 15 to 19) with a range of past educational experiences – graduated from Year 12, dropped out of school, educated at the Alternative Education Centre, currently at school in Year 10, 11 or 12, or recently employed. In addition, young women may start the programme at any time during the year. Despite this diverse client group with different start points the curriculum is not tailored to individuals and is not flexible. Students enrolling at different times of the year, in practice, receive different curricula. This 'one size fits all' approach means that students' needs are rarely met. An additional drawback is that the programmes within YPP, for example health studies, which are not delivered by the teacher, are not well-established and have to be planned from scratch each year.

Relevance

Students benefit from work experience and some find employment through support they receive from the YPP. However, they spend a high proportion of their time on academic subjects. Insufficient time is dedicated to parenting skills, health studies, ante-natal education and life-skills that should be supporting the students' maternity needs. Attempts at business education and information and communication technology (ICT) are positive. However, overall the academic programme is pitched at too low a level for most students and is approached as a primary school course rather than an adult-

education course. There are no learning opportunities for mothers and their babies built into the curriculum, for example, singing or baby gym.

Resources

The centre is generally under-resourced. There are no posters or displays of relevance, no magazines or periodicals and too few books on pregnancy, child birth or parenting. Too many of the text books are aimed at primary school children. There is a desperate lack of resources for adult education. The six computers are not used effectively - students can only use them under supervision in their ICT class. Students do not have access to useful online resources to support them in their pregnancies. The young women are not educated in acceptable internet use. Often they are all banned from using the internet due to behaviour problems arising from using social networking sites. However, the issues are not to do with the computers and more to do with relationship difficulties.

Teaching and Learning

There is a very wide range of abilities within the group. The teaching they receive is not varied enough for the different levels of students' abilities and starting points. The content of the academic subjects, the teaching styles, and what the visiting professionals offer are not always relevant. As a result, students' learning is limited and little progress is made. The work is not pitched at an appropriate level for the participants, some of whom are working at the standard of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), whilst others are well below. There are no records of students' starting points, what their needs are and how the centre would use the information for future learning. Students who have already studied CXC subjects are being given work more suitable for lower primary school age children. There is a lack of clear understanding of the needs of these pregnant teenagers: conflicts regarding their pregnancies, concerns and issues are dealt with as if they were in a regular class setting. For example, it is not acceptable to expect pregnant women to have to sit through lessons for up to one hour. They occasionally slouch or put their heads on desks, but the teacher constantly reminds them to sit up, even those who are in the later stages of their pregnancy.

2. How is the academic progress of each participant assessed by the programme (evaluation and tracking of individual achievements and progress)?

The centre does not yet track students' academic progress. There are insufficient opportunities for students to gain external accreditation and they do not follow any courses leading to a qualification, for example, CXC, GCSE¹ or the GED² programme. Links with the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) are not well-established and currently none of the students at YPP is enrolled there. Courses such as cosmetology, offered by the Alternative Education Centre on an occasional basis, provide students with certificates of participation.

Students' work is marked in their books, but no record is kept, either by the students or by the teacher of what they can and cannot do, or what they have covered. Little attempt is made on the part of the centre to find out from the high school what courses the student is studying, or what certificates the student may have gained in summer examinations. Baseline assessments such as the basic mathematics test, do not take

¹ General Certificate of Secondary Education

² General Educational Development examination

into account any qualifications the students may have and have little impact on the next steps in their learning.

Some individuals make some progress at the programme when the support provided meets their individual needs. For example, one student comes after school to do homework at the centre and reports that the programme helped her modify her behaviour so she could cope in the larger school setting. Another young woman has kept in touch and still draws upon support from staff at the centre for résumé writing, 13 years after leaving. However, overall students make limited progress because of the low level, 'one size fits all' approach and scant regard for their starting points. Some progress is made in lessons on business and computers, but much more could be made if the teachers established what students already know, understand and can do when they arrive.

Students who return to school often have to repeat a year as the work they do at YPP does not help them keep up with their high school studies. As a result, many students regress in their academic progress.

3. How many participants completed the programme between July 1994 – December 2006 and beyond?

There is not an accurate record of the numbers of participants in the YPP.

Information regarding numbers of students on the programme and their destinations is not readily available due to a lack of effective systems for data collection and analysis. There are few effective systems to monitor information such as numbers and ages of participants, educational background, date of baby's birth and destination (for example back to school, employment, UCCI etc). The YPP reports that 102 students 'graduated' between 1995 and 2007, but data from DCFS indicates only 39 women graduated in this period. YPP data indicates that there were no graduations in 1996 and 2002, although the annual report for these years indicates that students were enrolled in the programme.

There is no established system to exchange information between all the different agencies: schools, the Department of Education Services, the Health Services Association, the Department of Children and Family Services and the Young Parents' Programme. It is very easy therefore for young women to 'slip through the cracks'.

4. How many participants returned and completed their high school education?

No accurate data is available.

5. How many participants completed tertiary education or are enrolled in tertiary education?

No accurate data is available, although three students, who graduated from YPP in 2007, are currently enrolled at UCCI.

6. How effective are arrangements for supporting the participants' personal development?

The centre is clean and well kept by the young women under the supervision of the staff. Each person is scheduled for specific duties such as cleaning the floor, shopping and preparing meals, which they carry out over a period of time. These duties help the young women to develop leadership skills and responsibilities. Many carry out their tasks well.

The early morning parent / child bonding sessions are mostly focused on worship and discussions led by staff, rather than on parent and child activities. Staff choose the topics they want to discuss. Few students participate in singing and answering questions. Very little time is given to developing knowledge and insight into their own values and beliefs. They are not given enough chance to talk about themselves and to reflect on their personal experiences and how they are getting on as young mothers or mothers-to-be. Most remain very quiet and tight-lipped and do not participate much. They do not feel free to express their feelings as sometimes it is taken the wrong way. The opportunity for spiritual and moral development through reflections and application of positive values is limited, and relationships among staff and students need to be strengthened.

Some students have been able to manage the emotional stress and discomfort with which they arrived at the centre, and have become more positive about themselves. They have shown maturity and are making progress with managing their behaviour. However, a few students are still hostile, stressed and are deeply hurt, and carry ill feelings for each other because of personal issues. Many students have serious family and relationship difficulties and have not learnt to effectively manage their anger. This places a lot of pressure on the staff but particularly the coordinator who has to act as a counsellor. The young women respect her and know they can come to her about their problems. However, the students believe that some of the other staff judge them and 'put them down'.

There are no planned sessions for social interaction between the staff and young women throughout the day. The young women meet at break and lunch times to have meals and some bond with their babies. Others sit around and engage in little chats with their friends but students get very few opportunities to discuss common issues with each other or share ideas relating to their pregnancies.

There tends to be an atmosphere of passivity and suppression of feelings throughout the centre and things happens in silence or in very low tones. When the students get very upset for whatever reason, they often vent their frustrations in an inappropriate manner.

7. How effective are arrangements for supporting and guiding the participants and caring for their welfare?

The young women see the centre as a place where they can meet others in the same situation and where they can receive mutual support. Some of the visiting facilitators provide very helpful information, engage the students and help to make learning relevant to their needs. However, overall students believe their social and emotional needs are not well met and are of the opinion that they are still treated as schoolgirls in a

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classroom. Their pregnancies, preparation for childbirth and parenting skills are not seen as a priority and inappropriate academic work dominates the programme.

The programme offers welfare as well as academic components. There is medical assistance to mother and child, and food and clothing are given where necessary. The young women receive a stipend every fortnight and a voucher at the end of the month. Their medical appointments are monitored to ensure that they keep them. The driver transports the girls to and from their appointments at the hospital. Those absent from the centre are checked on by the coordinator, who also does home visits. The centre maintains close contact with parents who show an interest in their daughters.

The link between the high school and the centre is inadequate. No one is assigned to coordinate the work for the young women or to find out about any pastoral issues pertaining to them. Students feel they are on their own and that they are treated as outcasts by their school. Although all the young women are assigned social workers, they do not seem to play a key role in their support and care. Participants say that the centre is the only place that offers them a sense of belonging.

The Young Parents' Programme has provided scholarships for some young women to continue their education at UCCI. The programme also gives some financial support to students who attend university abroad. This is a great help to students who may not otherwise be able to take part in this level of education and helps increase their life chances. The centre also continues to assist with job placements for the unemployed young women.

The absence of a counsellor is a hindrance to the support, guidance and welfare of participants. Some participants are being exploited by men much older than themselves or have been pressurised into non-consensual relations and some may be involved in police investigations into defilement or statutory rape. Some participants have very difficult home lives. The young women are not given enough support to deal with their feelings and what they are going through or skills to help them develop coping strategies.

The centre also does not have access to a learning and behaviour disorder specialist who could provide emotional and social support to the young women. Those who have had serious behaviour problems in their former school, and were on long suspensions tend to carry over their inappropriate behaviours. Most participants display very poor self-esteem and do not think positively about themselves. They have not all learnt how to resolve personal issues and hurts, and are not always capable of handling problems caused by others. There is currently no effective provision in place to help support them with their difficulties.

There is no one in the centre with responsibility for overseeing the young women's maternity needs. Participants are encouraged to attend parent craft classes at the Cayman Islands Hospital, but none of the current cohort attends due to transport difficulties in the evening. Career guidance and practical sessions on parenting are limited. The parenting sessions are helpful, although they do not always capture what is relevant and immediate for the individuals. Currently there are no well planned food and nutrition sessions where the women can learn about proper dieting for themselves and their young babies. There is no provision for exercising mother and child.

8. How well is the educational programme led and managed?

The YPP centre is managed well in terms of the daily routines. The coordinator is committed to the work of the centre and carries out her role in a purposeful manner. She knows and understands the young women well and keeps in touch with their families. She takes time out to listen to them and to offer emotional support. On many occasions she takes on the role of counsellor or mentor. Her empathetic approach is a key strength of the programme and the participants rely on her greatly.

The coordinator is clear about the activities of the centre and what the programme should be offering. However, the current provision is not fulfilling the purpose of the centre, and the coordinator has accurately cited this as an issue. The goals and specific activities such as course work, counselling services and family networking are not happening effectively. The centre is under-resourced in terms of appropriate staff, equipment and materials.

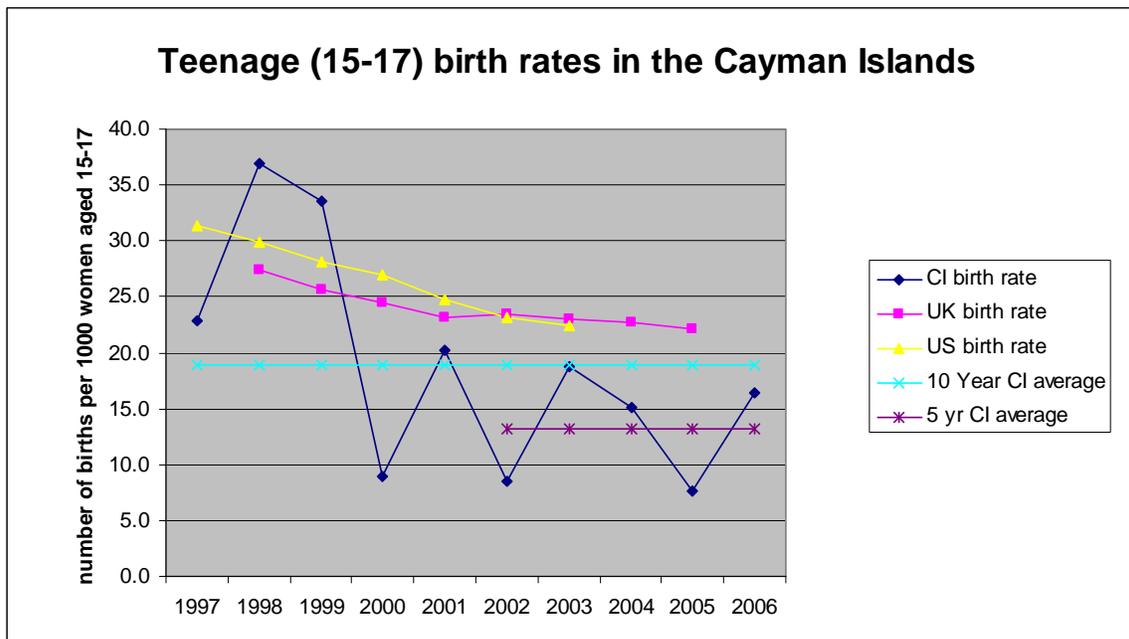
There is a lack of clarity in leadership roles that hinders the development of the programme. Although the coordinator has identified the need for a better structure in the programme, the necessary changes have not happened. Much of her work and what she has planned for the centre are not followed up or carried through effectively enough because she feels she does not have the authority to take many things forward. Information from annual reports, notes from meetings and memos indicate that many issues which this team has found, have previously been raised and reported by the coordinator to her department. However, they have not been addressed effectively. Too often, requests, complaints and suggestions have been noted by the programme manager in the DCFS and passed upwards to the director who passes them back down to the programme coordinator with the result that the programme does not move forward. The lack of collaboration between the department, coordinator and staff contributes to a lack of progress in improving the provision for the young women at the centre.

There is a lack of effective monitoring of the work of the Young Parents' Programme. The coordinator has the responsibility for all that happens at the centre, and she also teaches some lessons. This heavy work load limits her time to monitor, evaluate and improve the centre's work. The coordinator reports to the programme manager who in turn reports to the Director of Children and Family Services. It is unclear who is really responsible for leading the programme and ensuring that it achieves its intended outcomes.

APPENDIX

Analysis of teenage birth rates in the Cayman Islands

Birth rate for 15-17 year olds in the Cayman Islands												
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	10 yr average	5 yr average
No. of live births per 1000 women aged <15-17	22.8	37.0	33.5	8.9	20.3	8.5	18.8	15.0	7.6	16.4	18.9	13.2



Notes

- Data on births taken from “Live births to teenage mothers and total live births all ages, Cayman Islands 1995-2006” passed to D. Webb by the HSA.
- Population statistics for women age 15-17 taken from Economics and Statistics Office data on high school roll (government and private schools).
- Internationally, 15-17 year olds are the target group when trying to reduce teenage pregnancies.
- It is difficult to ascertain true teenage birth rates (<15 - 19) as we do not have population data for women of these ages.
- The data in the Cayman Islands is for birth rate rather than pregnancy rate. We do not have data on births overseas or abortions overseas. Many other jurisdictions state pregnancy rates which includes abortions.
- It is worth noting that the UK has one of the highest teenage birth rates in Europe, and the US has the highest in the world. Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Netherlands and Sweden all have teenage birth rates less than 10 per 1000.