

## **Pregnant Young Person - Policy for Education Settings**

### **Managing the support and reintegration of pregnant young people and school-age parents**



Adapted for Bedford Borough by: Public Health, School Improvement, Social Care, LAC, Sexual Health, Health Visiting/School Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health Colleagues.

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## 1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to help education settings support young people who are pregnant, or are parents, to ensure that they are supported and able to continue their education. Data related to rates of teenage conceptions in Bedford is published annually and is monitored locally by the Public Health Team. In Bedford Borough there is a Support Pathway for Parents Under 20 which ensures that all young parents are supported appropriately by a multi-agency approach (for more information contact Bedford Borough Early Help).

[The Framework for Supporting Teenage Mothers and Young Fathers \(2019\)](#)<sup>1</sup> highlights the challenges for young parents. The risk factors for early parenthood include: family poverty, persistent school absence by age 14, lower than expected attainment between ages 11 and 14 and being looked after or a care leaver.

Some young parents, through absence from school as a result of suspension or exclusion, may have missed out on the protective factors of high quality relationships and sex education, emotional wellbeing and resilience, positive parenting role models and having a trusted adult in their life. For a minority, these vulnerabilities may make parenting very challenging. Almost 60% of mothers involved in serious case reviews had their first child under 21.

However, evidence and lessons from local areas show that poor outcomes are not inevitable if early, coordinated and sustained support is put in place, which is trusted by young parents and focused on building their skills, confidence and aspirations.

This policy provides links to national guidance and services within Bedford Borough which can support young people. It highlights the responsibilities of education settings and actions that they can take to keep the pregnant young person (and their partner) safe and, ideally, remaining in education. Research demonstrates that teenage pregnancy is linked to poorer outcomes for both young parents and their children. Women who were teenage mothers are 22% more likely to be living in poverty at age 30, and the children born to teenage mothers have a 63% higher risk of living in poverty. Men who were young fathers are twice as likely to be unemployed at 30<sup>2</sup>. Teenage parents are less likely to finish their education, are more likely to face single-parenthood and have a higher risk of mental health problems than older mothers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Crown copyright publishing.service.gov.uk (2019) [A Framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers](#) Accessed 14 03 23

<sup>2</sup> Crown copyright publishing.service.gov.uk (2019) [A Framework for supporting teenage mothers and young fathers](#) Accessed 14 03 23

<sup>3</sup> [Teenage pregnancy | The Nuffield Trust](#)

It is therefore imperative that education settings take proactive steps to support expectant mothers and fathers, and new mothers and fathers, on their roll. In most cases it is possible to support pregnant young people to continue their chosen course of study at their own school by making a few reasonable adjustments and facilitating time off as required. Pastoral support will also be key in supporting the young parent(s) to access the right services.

## 2. Statutory guidance

- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- [Keeping children safe in education](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- [Teenage mothers and young fathers: support framework](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))
- [Working together to improve school attendance](http://www.gov.uk) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

## 3. Responsibility of education settings

[The Equality Act and Schools \(2010\)](#) outlines the duty of education settings and applies to all maintained and independent schools, including Academies, and maintained and non-maintained special schools. The Act extends protection against discrimination on grounds of pregnancy or maternity to pupils, so it will be unlawful, as well as against education policy, for a school to treat a pupil unfavourably because she is pregnant or a new mother:

*3.21 Protection for pupils from discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity in schools is covered in the Equality Act. This means it is unlawful for schools to treat a pupil less favourably because she becomes pregnant or has recently had a baby, or because she is breastfeeding. Schools will also have to factor in pregnancy and maternity when considering their obligations under the Equality Duty (see chapter 5).*

*3.22 Local authorities have a duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable full-time education for any pupils of compulsory school age who would not otherwise receive such an education. This could include pupils of compulsory school age who become pregnant or who are parents. In particular, where pupils are unable to attend their previous school, the local authority would need to consider whether this duty is applied. 'Suitable education' should meet the individual needs of the pupil and must take account of their age, ability, aptitude and individual needs, including any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities must have regard to statutory guidance on alternative provision and the ensuring a good education for children unable to attend school because of health needs.*

Schools should pay particular attention to the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) (s.149 of the Equality Act).

The latest guidance: [Relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education - GOV.UK](#) contains information on what schools should do and sets out the legal duties with which schools must comply when teaching Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

The response a young person receives from the education provider on disclosing her pregnancy may have a significant impact on how confident she feels in being able to continue to access education. The young person should be provided with all the support and information she needs, in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

The designation of a small team of trusted adults within the education setting should be agreed with the young person, their family, partner and colleagues as soon as possible. A small team of key adults mitigates against the potential detrimental impact of one key person being unavailable. Education settings may wish to use the template in Appendix 1 as a checklist, it can also be adapted for use for fathers. The form should be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary, with copies available to relevant staff, the young person and their parent/carer. Education settings may wish to use a 'wishes and feelings' approach to working with the young person, sample templates can be found at Assessment: [Wishes & Feelings Archives - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](#).

Education settings should use the [Statutory Guidance](#) for children who cannot attend school due to health needs in respect of the management of young person absence from school when medical reasons are cited.

The education setting should enquire via the [Bedford Borough Integrated Front Door \(IFD\)](#) if the Local Authority are aware of the pregnancy. If not, the education setting should notify them using the IFD in order for them to consider the need for an assessment to be initiated. Please see Bedford Borough [Safeguarding Procedures regarding pre-birth assessments](#) for more information.

## 4. Safeguarding

As per [Keeping children safe in education](#), school-age pregnancy can, in some circumstances, be an indicator of Child Sexual Exploitation or vulnerability. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should therefore be informed of a young person's pregnancy to identify whether there are any issues regarding the safety and wellbeing of the young person, their partner and unborn baby. If there are, these should be addressed in line with the setting's own safeguarding policy and the Bedford Borough [Safeguarding Procedures regarding pre-birth assessments](#)

A young person may choose to keep her pregnancy confidential within the wider education setting and peers for as long as possible. Whilst respecting this, key staff (including First Aiders) should be briefed appropriately and know where to locate emergency contact details (including the young person's GP and/midwife), should the need arise.

Education settings should ensure that the young person has a team of designated adults with whom she feels comfortable to speak to with any concerns.

If a school/college has health concerns around a young person who is pregnant, they should use the IFD as above to initiate an Early Help Assessment. Further support around health issues can be raised with the Bedfordshire School Nursing Service – contact the Health HUB on 0300 555 0606.

### **Safety during lessons, break and lunchtimes**

Education settings should complete a risk assessment with the young person around safety in lessons and unstructured time. This should be completed in collaboration with the young person, parent/carer and midwife. Where applicable, the school nurse, social worker, Early Help Professional, EHCP Coordinator/SEND Co and/or Virtual School for LAC keyworker, or another relevant professional may also be consulted/involved. The school may wish to use an Individual Healthcare Plan for this purpose. Templates are available [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#).

The usual safety routines which apply to all young persons in lessons such as PE, science and design technology for example, should apply to the pregnant young person, with adaptations as necessary. In PE, for example, participation in contact sports will be inadvisable. Some sporting activity may of course be appropriate and beneficial to the young person; this should be discussed and agreed with her and her parent/carer and with guidance from the relevant health professional (e.g., midwife or health visitor). It may be appropriate in a lesson such as Food Technology, to ensure that a pregnant young person does not eat certain food items which are not recommended during pregnancy; see [NHS Foods to avoid in pregnancy](#) for additional guidance.

A pregnant young person attending a school trip may require a specific risk assessment if she is to come into contact with animals, or if the activities are physical. Likewise, an additional risk assessment should be completed if the young person attends an off-site alternative provision placement.

It may be necessary for the pregnant young person to have a suitable place to rest and eat during break and lunchtimes; if possible, with a friend so that she does not become isolated or feel excluded. The young person may feel very conscious of her physical appearance and the scrutiny of other students. If this is the case, an early lunch pass might be appropriate, so that she can access canteen facilities ahead of the rest of the education setting. The young person may need to eat snacks between lessons to keep nausea at bay and provide energy; she should also be allowed to have access to drinking water at all times to remain hydrated.

Education settings should ensure that any discriminatory behaviour from other young people (and/ or staff) is avoided, and addressed as necessary through the whole-school culture and RSHE programme.

The need to urinate frequently, and nausea, are not unusual in pregnancy. The education setting is therefore advised to provide the young person with a toilet pass to avoid unnecessarily challenge from staff.

As the pregnancy progresses, sitting on the floor may become extremely uncomfortable; in situations where this would normally be the case (e.g in assembly), a chair should be provided. Likewise, it should be possible for the young person to stand up and move around in a classroom if remaining in the same seat becomes uncomfortable. The school should be prepared to make adaptations as required, recognising that needs may change throughout the duration of the pregnancy.

Adaptations to school uniform will be necessary over time and education settings should be accommodating in this area, ensuring that the young person is able to wear clothes which are comfortable (but could remain in school colours, for example).

## **5. Attendance**

Many pregnant young people will be able to continue to attend education setting up to a few weeks before the birth. However, some reasonable adjustments may need to be made.

If the young person is suffering from nausea, either in the morning or at other times of the day, the school may need to make suitable arrangements. For example, a later start to the day and/or easy access to toilets, the medical room or other appropriate space. The education setting should ensure that the young person is fully aware of where to go and that she has access (e.g. a time-out card) without unnecessary challenge.

Pregnant young people (and their partner) will need to attend a number of midwife and hospital appointments and may require the education setting's support in attending these. Potentially, this is an extremely vulnerable group, more likely to have an increased number of appointments, and more at risk of non-attendance. This therefore carries a greater risk to the health of both mother and child.

Education settings should refer to the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) guidance when coding pupil absence.

All young people are entitled to a full-time timetable. However, on occasion, a pregnant young person, or a young mother reintegrating into education following the birth, may benefit from a temporary part-time timetable. Authorised absences in these cases should be coded C. Any reduced timetable should be agreed in writing and include a planned review date. Education settings should be mindful of a young person's outcomes (see

Introduction) and make every effort to ensure that the young person is fully supported to achieve their maximum potential.

A Y11/Y13 pregnant young person may take study leave prior to the examination period, though this should only be the case once the exam syllabus has been completed. If the pregnant Y11/Y13 young person would prefer to come into the education setting when other Y11/Y13 students are on study leave, education settings should make provision for this (see paragraph 228, [Working together to improve school attendance](#).) Study leave should be coded S in the register.

If a pregnant young person missed one or more components of an examination due to illness (i.e. not the pregnancy per se, but excessive morning sickness, for example), then the education setting may apply for special consideration so that the young person receives a partial absence grade. The young person may then opt to re-sit the specification(s) at a subsequent date in order to receive a valid grade.

## 6. Maternity leave

As per [Working together to improve school attendance](#) paragraph 214, leave for maternity is treated like any other leave of absence. We would expect education settings to act reasonably and grant a sufficient period of leave, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each case. Ultimately, it is at the headteacher's discretion how much leave to grant. Consideration also needs to be given to expectant partners.

The dates for the young person's maternity leave should be agreed with the young person, her parent/carer and midwife. Prior to maternity leave starting, all parties should consider the young person's wishes regarding the completion of schoolwork at home and any examinations (if appropriate) and how the education setting will provide support. Possible considerations could include:

- online learning
- confirming email addresses if work is to be sent
- how 'hard copy' work packs might be delivered/collected
- how work will be returned for marking
- how feedback will be communicated/marked work will be
- key point of contact in education setting to collate and re-distribute work/marked work between subject staff and young person if not being done electronically
- how the young person will contact subject staff if she has questions or requires support
- examination access
- pausing/cessation of any off-site alternative provision placements (and possible return dates).

## 7. Paternity leave



A young father may be granted paternity leave and be coded C for authorised absence. In line with guidance for working fathers, it is recommended that a period of 1-2 weeks be sufficient.

## **8. Reintegration into education**

A reduced timetable may be required as the young mother returns to the education setting. Please see the guidance above for further information (see Attendance). The school may need to consider a reduced exam offer if the pupil needs that to fit in with new responsibilities; she may also benefit from access to a quiet space in which to study and catch up if that is proving difficult at home.

## **9. Childcare**

Young parents who require childcare in order to be able to return to school can access information at [Help paying for childcare - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/help-paying-for-childcare). The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs for young mothers under 20 years old. Further details are available at <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

## **10. Breastfeeding/expressing breastmilk**

A young mother who returns to school may require reasonable adjustments to enable her to either breastfeed her baby, or express milk. If a young mother does not have the opportunity to express milk, her breasts may become engorged and painful; education settings should make provision for the young person to access a private space in which to express and a fridge to store milk.

The young person may need to return home at lunchtime, for example, to feed her baby. Education settings should make allowances for these temporary absences.

The need to breastfeed can impact on attendance and may even result in dropping out, which can affect life chances, so education settings should be as supportive as possible – making it better for both child and parent.

Breastfeeding support is available from the Baby Friendly team at Bedfordshire Community Health Services Team. Contact details can be found at:  
<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/baby-friendly>

## **11. Suggested template Education Setting Care Plan**

See Appendix 1.

## **12. Bedford Borough Council procedures**

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) provides guidance and support for schools and parents/ carers with young people who are too unwell to attend school. Pregnancy is not an illness and, in most cases, a referral to the Medical Needs Service will be unnecessary.

There may, however, be occasions when a pregnant young person is absent for longer periods due to ill health. In such cases, the school should refer to the Bedford Borough Education Welfare Team for support and guidance.

Education settings are encouraged to keep young people who are pregnant and young mothers on roll and support them in every way possible. On rare occasions, a pupil who is pregnant or a young mother may opt to be electively home educated. In these circumstances the setting should contact the Bedford Borough School Improvement Team for advice and support.

### 13. Accessing support

- Bedford Borough Under 20s Parents Support [lindsey.salisbury@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:lindsey.salisbury@bedford.gov.uk)
- [Bedfordshire School Nursing Service](#) or contact the Health HUB on 0300 555 0606
- [Bedford Borough Local Offer](#)
- Baby Buddy: [Baby Buddy app](#) | [Best Beginnings](#)
- [Healthy Start](#): help to buy healthy food and milk
- Breastfeeding support: [Bedfordshire Baby Friendly Team](#).
- Contraception and sexual health service: [iCaSH Bedfordshire](#)
- [Chat Health](#): Text service for 11-19 year olds in Bedfordshire - 07507 331450
- [Parent Line](#): 07507 331450 Confidential text messaging and support line for parents and carers of children in Bedfordshire aged 0-19 years
- [Think Dad](#) A father inclusive toolkit for professionals
- Registering the birth: <https://www.gov.uk/register-birth>
- Sure Start Maternity Grant: Claim form [Sure Start Maternity Grant claim form - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Abortion service: [BPAS Bedford](#) or via referral by GP.

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APPENDIX 1

# Suggested template Education Setting Care Plan

Name of young person			
DOB		Expected date of delivery	
Form/tutor group			
<b>Key designated adults in education setting</b>			
Name	Role		
<b>Key Staff informed</b>			
Name/role	Name/role	Name/role	Name/role
e.g. Mr Peters, DSL e.g. Mrs Strong,			
<b>Emergency Contact Details</b>			
Name 1 <sup>st</sup> Contact		Relationship	
Telephone (home)		Telephone (work)	
Name 2 <sup>nd</sup> Contact		Relationship	
Telephone (home)		Telephone (work)	
<b>Emergency health/care professionals contact details</b>			
GP		Telephone Email	
Midwife		Telephone Email	
Health Visitor		Telephone Email	
School Nurse		Telephone Email	
Social Worker		Telephone Email	
<b>Education Setting arrangements</b>			
Toilet Pass Issued		Date	
Rest Area identified		To be accessible (times of day)	
Break arrangements (e.g. canteen pass, space to rest, friend to accompany etc.)			
Lunch arrangements (e.g., canteen pass,			

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space to rest, friend to accompany etc.)			
School uniform Adjustments			
Whole-school risk assessment with relevant sections for individual lessons as necessary(attach)	Yes/no	Date Agreed	Signature
If KS4, provide details of any examination adjustments			
Are any transport adjustments necessary? If so, provide detail			
<b>Maternity/Paternity leave arrangements (can be reviewed/amended at any time)</b>			
Key education setting contact during leave		Frequency of Contact	
Type of contact required (e.g. phone/email/home visits)		Agreed period of Maternity/paternity leave	
Agreed education provision during maternity/paternity leave			
Resources the young person will need/who will oversee this?			
Other			
<b>After the birth</b>			
When does the young person hope to return to school?			
What adjustments may need to be made?	e.g., timetable rest space space to express milk temporary absence during the school day to feed the baby updated risk assessments (subject specific if required) toilet pass		
Date of form completed		Date of next review	
<b>Signed</b>			
Young person	Parent/carers	School rep	Health rep