

INTRODUCING BUILDING HEALTH RELATIONSHIPS - A NEW POLICY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN HEREFORDSHIRE'S CARE

Report By: Head of Social Care (Children)

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

1. To raise awareness of the recent launch of *Building Healthy Relationships*, Herefordshire's new Sex and Relationships Policy for young people in public care and seek the Committees support for the policy and work plan.

Financial Implications

2. None identified.

Background

3. Over the past eighteen months a multi-agency group has been working with the West Midlands Teenage pregnancy Young People in Care Project to implement a new approach to providing sex and relationships education for young people in care. One of the main aims of this work was to increase knowledge and use of a document published in 2001 by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit – *Guidance for Field Social Workers, Residential Social Workers and Foster Carers on Providing Information and Referring Young People to contraceptive and Sexual Health Services*, London: Department of Health.
4. The steering group has produced a policy: *Building Healthy Sexual Relationships*, which integrates and extends this guidance to produce a comprehensive approach to the topic in a format that is accessible to all workers with young people in care – their foster carers, family placement workers, social workers and support workers.
5. The document, comprising policy, practice, procedures and comprehensive guidance on further sources of support, was formally launched at an event on 10th September 2004. The event attracted an audience of over 60 professionals from social care, health, education and the independent sector. The event was opened by Jon Dudley, Children's Service Manager (Resources) and Max Biddulph, West Midlands Teenage Pregnancy Young People in Care Project, gave the keynote speech. Participants joined workshop sessions, facilitated by suitably trained workers, to promote discussion of how the policy will be put into practice. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. A copy of the document is enclosed separately for Members of the Committee and is available to the public on request.

6. This piece of work should be seen in context of a positive assessment by the West Midlands (South) Strategic Health Authority of the content and achievements of Herefordshire's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for all young people in the County.

Proposed Plan of work

7. The training programme for foster carers is to be re-modelled to incorporate a section on Sex and Relationship Education, and it is planned that fieldwork staff working with looked after children will have opportunities to attend this training.
8. The possibility of using Sex and Relationships Education work as part of post approval training and on-going accreditation for foster carers is to be explored.
9. Consultation with young people in schools has already been undertaken as part of developing Herefordshire's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Consultation with focus groups of young people in care will be commissioned via 'Voices' workers as part of the launch strategy for *Building Healthy Sexual Relationships*. The twin aims of this piece of work will be to seek the young people's views on its contents, and to develop a user-friendly version of the document for wider distribution to the children themselves.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the policy *Building Healthy Sexual Relationships*, and the plan of work in hand to ensure its implementation, be noted and supported.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified.