



Teens and Toddlers in Tower Hamlets

A practical teenage *pregnancy prevention* programme fostering, through intensive interaction with toddlers and classroom instruction, greater awareness of the reality of conception and of parenting for young people *long before unwanted pregnancies occur*.

A project of:
**Children: Our Ultimate Investment
(UK)**

In conjunction with:
**The Psychosynthesis and Education
Trust
Children: Our Ultimate Investment
(USA)**



**Project Report
March 2004**

Teens and Toddlers

A practical teenage pregnancy prevention programme founded on the importance of awareness of the reality of conception and parenting for young people.

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Executive Summary

Britain has the worst record of teenage pregnancies in Europe. The causes of these early pregnancies are varied and complex, rarely successfully addressed by largely inadequate sex education (many teenagers still report a belief that they can't get pregnant the first time they have sex). Other factors include unstable home lives, insecurity and longing to belong and be loved, lack of hope for the future and poor understanding of relationships

COUI (UK) has been running Teens & Toddlers programmes since 2001, providing high quality, pragmatic and effective programmes enabling young people to address the issue of teenage pregnancy in ways that ensure the delay of pregnancy until later in life.

Teens and Toddlers is an innovative, practical teenage pregnancy prevention and mental health programme fostering greater awareness of the reality of conception and parenting for young people, long before unwanted pregnancies occur. This is achieved by providing the teens with intensive interaction with toddlers in a safe nursery environment and with classroom instruction is highly interactive and experiential.

Teens & Toddlers has just completed the fifth project in Greenwich where it was first piloted in the summer term of 2001, and the fourth project is running in Southwark. The project will be launched in Islington in the summer term 2004. Following the success of the Teens & Toddlers pilot projects in London, and the level of interest generated by articles in the Guardian and the Times newspapers, Children Our Ultimate Investment decided to initiate an Accreditation Programme training local people to be facilitators in order to ensure sustainability for boroughs, first piloted in Southwark.

COUI (UK) is delighted to be providing this report for the first project to run in Tower Hamlets. The project was funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation and was organised in partnership with Helen James, Sex Education Advisor for Tower Hamlets. It drew 30 adolescents from George Green School and Central Foundation Girls School. Two of the groups operated for ten weeks, meeting twice a week for three hours, hosted by Overland's Nursery and Queen Mary's Nursery. Another two groups operated for 14 and 20 weeks, hosted by George Green Children's Centre and Harbinger Nursery.

The project includes three key elements:

- Regular one-to-one contact between the young adolescents and a 'toddler'
- Classroom time focussing on parenting skills, sexuality and relationships
- Individual attention and support for young people at most risk and need

The practical nature of the project and the way in which it elicits interest and alliance from the participants is a unique aspect of its success. The teaching strategy is based upon a Confluent Education model, integrating personal

experience with theoretical understanding. Learning methods include: small group didactic work, large group discussion, practicum work in pairs, experiential exercises, individual support sessions and one-to-one counselling.

COUI (UK) is currently in a time of rapid expansion:

- With the help of The Learning and Skills Council COUI is working with Training for Change to provide the skills necessary to take the accreditation of the Facilitator Training Programme through to completion. Substantial interest has been shown by various education and social services in London and throughout Great Britain, and the goal is for the Southwark pilot training to result in COUI applying for accreditation over the next two years. Current avenues of exploration are the National Qualification Framework, NVQ, City & Guilds and the possibility of the project being accredited as a short course with the University of East London (in conjunction with The Psychosynthesis and Education Trust).
- COUI has received a grant from the ARK Foundation with the intention of providing sustainability and development of Teens & Toddlers throughout London and Nationwide. The intention is to focus on increasing and improving service delivery through the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness.
- A clinical service has been established since September 2002 offering student counsellors placements in Teens & Toddlers projects and in schools in Greenwich, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. The aim is that this work will develop in to a specialist training programme for Youth Workers, teachers and Social Workers, disseminating the particular approach to work with young people that COUI is developing.

COUI hopes that the first project within Tower Hamlets will extend to many more, so that Teens & Toddlers develops in to a sustained and on-going element within the educational culture of the Borough.

Background

The Teens and Toddlers programme was originally created and funded by Laura Huxley, founder of Children: Our Ultimate Investment (COUI), a US non-profit organisation. The teen pregnancy prevention program was first run as a pilot programme by COUI in 1978, and was later operated by EnCompass Learning Centre at Sierra Central High School in Grass Valley, California, from 1994-98.

The 1998-1999 year graduated 57 students. The national average for teen pregnancy in the area of the country in which the courses ran was 9.7%, and in the Latino population, which largely made up the ethnicity of the teenagers on the course, it is 16.9%. On the basis of these statistics, out of the students participating there should have been 7 pregnancies in the first calendar year, yet only one student became pregnant. In the four years that EnCompass operated Teens and Toddlers, no pregnancies were reported in the their student body.

The 1st three pilots in the UK were run in conjunction with Greenwich unit for pregnancy prevention, EAZ and Early Years. A fifth project has recently completed in Greenwich. The first pilot for Southwark was run in Autumn 2002, in conjunction with The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Local Implementation Fund and the second project included a training of local people as Teens & Toddlers facilitators, funded by The Learning and Skills Council. There is currently a fourth project running in Southwark, a fifth has been completed in Greenwich and the first is taking place in Islington. The first project to be run in Tower Hamlets is the focus of this report.

Outline of the project

The first Tower Hamlets Teens & Toddlers ran in the Autumn Term of 2003, with half of the project continuing through to the first few weeks of January 2004. There were two participating schools, George Green School and Central Foundation Girls School. Four nurseries hosted the project; George Green Children's Centre, Overland's Nursery, Harbinger Nursery and Queen Mary's Nursery.

Two of the projects ran for 10 weeks, meeting twice a week for two hours of toddler time and one hour of classroom input, one project ran for 20 weeks and one for 14 weeks, meeting once a week for two hours of toddler time and one hour of classroom input. Each week covered a new subject within the curriculum as well as asking them to address their personal strengths and challenges as they emerged throughout the weeks.

Some of the key subjects covered in the curriculum were:

- Human potential: creating a resume, recognising personal skills and strengths.
- Developmental milestones for a toddler, developing empathy towards children and the meaning behind difficult behaviour.
- Communicating effectively with toddlers. Enhancing communication skills generally.
- Understanding the importance of preparing for conception and the importance of the fathering role as well as the mothering role.
- Investigating the many issues involved in sexual relationship. Assessing our primary needs in relationship: the need for love and for self-assertion.
- Anger management: self-valuing and self-assertion.
- Teaching the physiological aspects of conception and pregnancy and the damaging effects of drugs, alcohol and environmental toxins.
- Investigating the development of the newborn baby. Healthy ways to bond with and stimulate the newborn.
- Understanding the developmental milestones within the first year of life and how to set healthy boundaries.

Developmental Issues

COUI brings a unique perspective regarding the developmental issues that young people are struggling with. The combination of intensive adult and peer group interaction alongside the responsibility of bonding with, and being responsible for, their toddlers, provides a multi-layered set of relationships that are all designed to give the teenagers a new experience of themselves and the world around them.

Young people are at a stage in their lives when they are forming their identities, developing their capacity to think, searching for core values around which to orientate their behaviour and seeking future goals towards which they can aspire.

Many of the young people on the project are at risk of failing to meet these developmental needs in a positive way, instead forming identities around a negative sense of themselves, born from a sense of hopelessness in the world around them. As a result the sum total of their aspirations in life is often to make as much money with as little effort as possible, and therefore to fall prey to criminal activities or to make money in ways that exploit them and continue to compound a sense of failure. At best they will tend towards a rather depressed and passive attitude to life in which they expect to be looked after by a parental state. From this attitude it is 'no big deal' to become pregnant, as they are often hoping a boyfriend or the benefit system will subsequently look after them.

Teens & Toddlers provides the intensive adult attention needed to increase and firm up their sense of individuality, hopes and fears, opinions, and dreams. This is provided in the group work, and in the one-one support sessions that facilitators provide. ***From the start the adolescents are required to think about the values which create safety, support and a positive environment for all participants*** and it is our repeated experience that below the 'I don't give a shit' attitude that they often come with, that the teenagers are longing to express their values and opinions, to test them out in the world and see what the consequences are. Facilitators provide strong guidance and boundaries whilst expressing interest in their opinions, and conflicts/problems are processed in a way that makes meaning of the outcomes that their behaviour creates. In this respect the young people are less dictated to, ***more encouraged to develop the capacity to think through their goals and the best ways to create outcomes that work for them. This establishes personal responsibility as a keynote in their lives and attitudes,*** crucial to the issue of pregnancy and the creation of lives on large and small scales that they are motivated to move towards.

The practical nature of the project appeals to the young people's needs to test themselves in the world in a real and tangible way. The theoretical nature of their schooling often misses their need to 'test their metal' in the 'real world', an initiatory task that is often left to the kind of gang culture and law breaking that we commonly associate with youth.

As they are required to form relationships with the toddlers in the nurseries and to be useful members of staff they are challenged and stretched to manifest their capacity to be caring, reliable, creative and communicative.

This expectation alone and the obvious responsibility of having a child to look after often pulls the teenagers in to parts of themselves that allow them to feel vibrant and alive and which they also like and respect. The enthusiasm that they display at the end of toddler time usually reflects a fascination with the application of the material they are learning about child development and good communication skills, as well as a sense of satisfaction in having been needed, wanted and responded to by staff and toddlers. This forms an attitude internally of 'I can' as they integrate the positive expectations of the toddlers, staff and facilitators.

Additionally, the project provides a strong sense of community for adolescents, often a strongly missing link in their lives, yet one that they desperately need. So much of their culture today teaches a myth of isolation and individualistic self at the expense of providing a sense of interconnection and belonging. The formation of their group within the nursery, the peer and facilitator relationships, and the sense of community within the nursery itself are a very important part of stressing the importance of being inter-dependant on each other, and that therefore their behaviour has a strong impact on others. The desensitisation that comes through the breakdown of community allows young people to be anaesthetised to their surroundings and makes it acceptable to harm and exploit others. ***Bringing them in to relationship over a period of time sows seeds that enables them to bring a sense of pride to the caring and positive impact they have on their community.*** This sense of belonging in a productive way is key to the success of the project.

Additionally the project addresses these developmental issues through:

- ***Anger management.*** This is a unit within the curriculum that has proven to be particularly effective and popular with the teenagers. Using a variety of techniques to identify early signals of anger, the facilitators also work with each young person to develop several strategies for minimising acting out and turning aggression in to assertive behaviour. Role-play is often used to work through real-life situations that the teenagers are involved in at school or at home. Occasionally there are disputes or conflicts within the peer group during the project and this provides a productive opportunity to make the theory absolutely real and current. This gives them an immediate experience of how to manage anger. Peer input and discussion is used for suggestions and support as to how to handle these experiences differently. ***The fact that the project provides such dynamic and real interaction with staff, facilitators, toddlers and peers takes this subject beyond cold theory and brings it alive. This gives the teens an experience of 'here and now' choices and the power they have to create different outcomes for themselves.*** This dramatically increases their motivation to continue to choose differently in other areas of their lives. ***Additionally, changing the negative outcomes of angry reactions in to positive outcomes from assertive communication is a major re-framing in a culture that usually promotes the necessity of 'keeping face' at all costs.***

- *More specifically, the boys on the project explore their own fathering experience*, which is often absent or abusive, and to challenge the unconsciously inherited messages that 'to be a man is to be macho and look after number 1'. Lacking other places in which to re-define what male strength is, they are often destined to repeat the wounding they received with their own children. **Teens & Toddlers creates a supportive environment which encourages them to explore the nature and meaning of strength, and within the context of being kind and caring towards a toddler who is loving and needing them, they build new and more productive value systems which will form firmer foundations for them as growing men.**
- *Development of loyalty beyond the immediate family unit.* For most of the teenagers there is a strong tribal code of loyalty within the family, which means they inherit unconscious values and behaviours. **Additionally, it is often considered disloyal to speak about problems at home with anyone outside the family and so adolescents are left holding a lot of confusion**, pain and responsibility with no adult intervention to help them 'chew' over what is occurring in their lives. This 'chewing' is vitally important, **enabling young adults to develop reflective muscles which will provide a more robust capacity to 'think through' challenges and choices in the future. Teaching them to use their minds in this capacity is something the current education system fails to address, and is one of the projects strengths.** Through sharing at both peer group level and one-to-one time with facilitators the young people create bonds beyond the immediate tribe and digest the inherited opinions and values of their immediate family and peer group **to develop a more clearly individuated sense of themselves.**
- *Facilitators provide the young people with an experience of straight talking, tough love and containment alongside the heart-opening experience of being related to by the toddlers.* This potent combination evokes both their **Will** - to make choices and not just be blindly led by unconscious behaviour - and their **Love** - through the empathy, understanding and interest shown to them by the facilitators, and from the love, need and respect shown to them by the toddlers. **Most approaches to working with young people tend to focus on one or the other and thus something significant is lost.** One sides approaches often end up either re-creating a tough world that has certain expectations of them but feels ultimately hollow, or a too-floppy containment that attempts to understand root cause without the necessary robustness to challenge new behaviour. **Finding a way to include the evocation of both Will and Love is another of the projects strengths.**
- *Young people are used to shaming each other and generally putting each other down as a way of scoring points in the hierarchy within their peer group. The project spends a lot of time addressing their ability to listen respectfully to each other, and to give positive feedback.* This re-frames a habitual way of

communicating that they would otherwise take in to their adult lives, teaching what creates intimacy and builds trust (something that they come to enjoy as they feel closer to each other) rather than humiliates and alienates. Given the way in which many adults relate, providing this early intervention has countless ripple effects in the communities that the teens belong to.

- The project gives the kids something worth towing the line for and therefore sufficient motivation to have a positive experience of engaging with respect and an ability to integrate other's rules and expectations. Being with the toddlers, feeling listened to and engaged with in debate during classroom time, and experience of peer group outside of school and the usual social circles - in a more focused way that encourages honesty, listening, respect and intimacy - are all very strong motivating factors for the young people to behave and interact in new and more useful ways than the often bored interactions they usually have with the world around them. **Bonds to their peers and facilitators made here are often much deeper and provide a blueprint for possibilities of relating respectfully and productively beyond the project.** These bonds go beyond 'mucking about together' or generally gaining respect from peers via breaking rules and acting out.

How facilitator training provides the necessary skills

Teens & Toddlers Facilitators are trained in a way that enables them to meet the young peoples' developmental needs.

Due to the unique approach that Teens & Toddlers takes with adolescents, and the multi-levelled skills approach that are necessary, facilitators are required to go through a rigorous training schedule that develops their abilities the maximum in a variety of ways.

One of the major strengths of the training is that it's intensive nature requires trainees to work on themselves in much the same way that they will be requiring of the adolescents on the project. This 'inside out' experiential form of teaching, mixed with theory, is based on a Confluent Educational approach, integrating personal experience with theoretical understanding of the material. This approach recognises the value of 'learning by experience', which enables the student to more fully integrate the academic content of the course.

This rigour in the training also makes the facilitators more congruent as people, and therefore less likely to patronise the adolescents or create unnecessary distance based on 'us and them' thinking. Many adults have unresolved conflicts that stem back to their own teenage years, and often when they begin working with adolescents these themes can be unconsciously stimulated. COUI's approach ensures as much as possible that facilitators are

conscious of their own agendas regarding young people so that they do not unknowingly alienate the teens who are very sensitive to being patronised or dictated to. This means that the best possible conditions are created for the adolescents to absorb the material presented and maximise the experience with their peer group and toddlers.

The training's pragmatic approach also requires trainees to start developing their facilitation skills right from the start, encouraging them to integrate the theory through 'mock up' small group work, developing their capacity to take leadership of a group effectively, to facilitate group dynamics, to use counselling skills to enable supportive communication with the young people and to understand and facilitate the emotional and psychological literacy which is fundamental to the aims of the project.

Trainees develop:

- Group facilitation skills with the capacity to handle group dynamics and conflict resolution.
- Coaching skills enabling them to form constructive, safe relationships with young people and to provide them with the confidence to effectively manage the sharing of personal and sometimes distressing material by the teenagers.
- A deepening of their capacity to listen within group and one-one contexts, to identify and develop themes and clarify useful insight and outcomes that enable young people to utilise their learning in satisfying, useful ways.
- A model of teaching is used that enables trainees to present theoretical material to the young people in ways that made it relevant to their own life circumstances and therefore interesting to them. Although this model of teaching is more complex and therefore harder work than a standard approach, as it requires personal interaction with the teenagers in order to capture their attention and elicit their cooperation, in our experience it is the most effective one in terms of meeting the objectives of the Teens & Toddlers programme.
- The capacity to develop an alliance with the young people provides the cornerstone for all learning within Teens & Toddlers.

This last point is immensely important and a unique part of Teens & Toddlers. Young people are notoriously difficult to form relationships with, and the resultant sense of isolation and misunderstanding causes much of the destructive breakdown within adolescents' lives and behaviour. The capacity to 'reach' the young people on their own terms, yet within a context that provides a strong sense of values emphasising personal responsibility, care for others, and hope for the future, is a potent and catalytic element to the success of Teens & Toddlers.

The four project sites

OVERLANDS NURSERY

The facilitator at this nursery was Janet Currier with Michael Minting as her assistant in his final stage of Facilitator training. This project site had eight adolescents assigned.

Janet and Michael were very complementary about this nursery. It has a hearing impaired unit with specialists and the management was very supportive of the project. The teens were nervous at first, as they usually are, but gradually lost their inhibitions and began bonding with their toddlers. **Janet reported that the group was dynamic and engaged but that they had difficulty listening and focusing. She dealt with this by spending more time than usual going over the ground rules, discussing the importance of listening respectfully to other people, the shaming effect of laughing at others' input, and covering other basics for good communication to create safety within the group.** The effect of this learning was significant for the group, and may have been the first time anyone had engaged with them in a way that explained the effect of positive and negative responses to other people, rather than simply trying to enforce a 'be quiet' rule, which instead of educating results in a war of wills. Young people are often very used to 'taking the piss' out of each other as a way of 'bigging themselves up' in the invisible hierarchy of their peer groups. **This group spent time learning to give positive feedback to each other thus developing an ability to value themselves and each other, a huge learning for many of them who came to the project locked in to unhelpful behaviour destined to alienate them from their environment.**

There were some girls from a Pupil Referral Unit, and interestingly they had the best attendance. **One of the participants in particular had a history of truanting and her mother had been prosecuted for her lack of attendance at school. However, she finished the project with the best attendance of any participant.** One of the other participants, although fine with the toddlers, had challenging behaviour during the classroom input, which was a familiar mode of behaviour for her. **Janet met her challenge very firmly, stating that she was not there to make the course entertaining for her, and that she had her own responsibility for making it stimulating by bringing an interested attitude. Additionally the facilitators took her input seriously and encouraged her to contribute in a way that valued what she was saying, rather than acting 'the fool'.** This type of 'Will and Love' approach to interacting with the teens is a potent approach in the project and one which both challenges firmly, whilst respecting and listening. Janet used this 'bottom line' communication during toddler time when one of the other girls was listlessly not engaging with her toddler, saying that she was bored (an inability to play is a common theme amongst these teenagers as many of them have not been actively played with as children themselves). **Janet's message was 'get off your arse and start playing', and the girl's response was 'I did, and it was great!'** These adolescents respond well to direct, straightforward communication that let's them know where they stand in a respectful way.

The teenagers reported getting a lot out of the project. **One girl who had exams one week even made her own way to the nursery at the end of the day, 15 minutes before the end of the project, in order to check in with the facilitators. This is evidence of the degree of commitment and relatedness that she had achieved through the project, particularly striking as this girl has attendance problems at school.** The facilitators provided one-one sessions for all the participants and one of the girls told Janet that she had shared things about herself and her life that she never had before. She had a lot of problems which she had not been sharing with anyone, and which had been getting in her way. With Janet's help she found new and more empowering ways to deal with her feelings. **This girl learned that she had very little tolerance for small children, which was a big learning for her as she had arrived at the project intending to get pregnant 'soon'.** She also discovered that she didn't have to deal with issues alone in her life, and was encouraged to find on-going support in her life. Another participant had big problems controlling her temper in her life, became very angry with one of the nursery members of staff who she thought had been disrespectful to her. Janet worked with her individually and together they role played different ways of expressing herself, working through the heat of the moment, to a place where the girl could go back to the staff member and make a more coherent request for change in their relationship. **This was the first time the teen had experienced her ability to control her anger and acknowledged her ability to contain herself and communicate from a place more likely to get her needs met.** This approach challenges a culture that emphasises 'keeping face' at all costs (and often the costs are huge).

This combined use of individual attention and group time is a strength in the project and allows intimacy and trust to develop between the facilitators and teens. **This experience of trusting an adult is often a keystone for the teenagers, and forms a basis for trust to be established in other relationships.** This is also reflected in the teens' bonds with their toddlers. They made cards for their children with the qualities and strengths they saw in them. The toddlers make their teens cards as well, and this exchange was a very touching experience for everyone.

QUEEN MARYS NURSERY

The facilitator at this project site was Duncan Bain-Smith, assisted by Elisabeth Braun. It had 8 participants.

There were also compliments for this nursery, with reports that the staff were encouraging and supportive. There were quite a lot of speech and learning

difficulties among the toddlers and English was also a second language for many of them.

Once again, many of the teenagers were serial non-attenders at school, and in fact this was one of the reasons the school sent them. There were some communication difficulties with the school, often the case when the project operates in a borough for the first time and the school has not fully taken on board the nature of the project, and when some of the participants were excluded from school, they were also banned from going to the project (as additional punishment). **Despite this, a few of the excluded girls turned up at the nursery, evidence of how they were developing commitment despite their tendency to be ambivalent about discipline in other areas of their lives.**

Developing positive relationships with the participating schools, and educating the teaching staff about the usefulness of Teens & Toddlers in terms of the problems they are fire-fighting at school, is one of COUI's on-going objectives, and another of the many reasons why building a long-term relationship within a borough through a series of projects is so important; utilising the benefits of enculturating the schools and nurseries with the Teens & Toddlers approach.

One of the girls came from a violent family background and was living with foster parents. She was intelligent and well-educated but it emerged during a one-one session with Elisabeth that she did not want to follow through on an arranged marriage in Bangladesh. **She had been intending to fall pregnant as a way of avoiding this fate. Talking it through with Elisabeth she became more thoughtful about the consequences and responsibility of bringing a child in to the world for this reason and towards the end of the project she confided that she has started using contraception and is no longer trying to fall pregnant.** She began as a very quiet, closed off girl at the beginning of the project, but developed a tight bond with her toddler which contributed hugely to her increased motivation not to get pregnant and subject a child to that kind of unstable situation. **She contributed more and more in the peer group time and moved from a suspiciousness of Duncan, having previously seen all men as authoritarian and violent (from her experience of the men in her family) to developing trust.**

This highlights several very important aspects of the project. Firstly that many of the teens have negative experiences of male members of their families, who are often either absent or abusive in some form or other. **Male facilitators provide a new experience for the teens that gradually re-frames their attitudes towards men – vital for the girls and their future relationships, raising their expectations at the very least, but even more vital for the boys who need positive role-models to increase their self-esteem as developing men.** Secondly, many of the girls arrive at the project with secret intentions to become pregnant as a way of getting out of situations, or getting support (from family, boyfriends or the State). Through the project they examine these motivations more closely, develop bonds with their toddlers as REAL PEOPLE rather than a vague idea of a 'child who will love them'. **They come to care for their toddlers and wish the best for them, recognising that bringing children in to chaotic situations to serve as a means to an end – usually negatively and**

destructively – is not something that they actively want to do. The multi-levelled nature of this impact on their attitudes cannot be over-emphasised and demonstrates the many ways in which the project serves the community.

Another of the participants was very confrontational at school, with big behaviour problems, but was wonderful at the nursery in the project. **She was a very bright and perceptive girl who was frustrated at not being listened to and had developed a series of destructive behaviours, all unconscious calls for attention and stimulation.** Through the project she had a positive experience of her strengths, through receiving the kind of guidance and attention that **challenged her to make the most of her contributions and to take herself seriously enough to stop ‘acting out’ and instead apply herself and therefore have an experience of success and respect.** Discovering that they have a part to play in the way in which adults relate to them – through either encouraging positive responses or negative ones through their own behaviour and attitudes – is a vital part of the project for the adolescents. Possibly one of the single most important ones that they will take in to their adult lives.

GEORGE GREEN EARLY YEARS CENTRE

The facilitator at this nursery was Val Harris, assisted by Marji Beech. There were seven participants.

This was a very dynamic group, actively engaged with each other and the facilitators. One of the girls didn't engage very much with the facilitators initially and was quiet in the group. However, during the project she increased her self-confidence hugely and became actively involved moving from a 'do I have to do this' attitude to one of enjoyment and participation. **In particular she began the project expecting to be bored by having to ‘give’ to someone else, instead very focused on ‘getting’ whatever she could. Interestingly she discovered the pleasure that came from giving, especially through feeling an integral part of her toddlers life and not giving up when things did occasionally get boring.** This experience of moving from 'what can I get' to 'what can I give' is another major plus of the project and one which challenges our current culture's 'me' centered approach, that leads to an inability to contribute to society and to follow through when life gets inevitably boring through the hollowness associated with constant consuming (in which nothing is ever enough). **Discovering the stimulation that comes with contributing and being actively engaged is a very new and surprising element of Teens & Toddlers for most adolescents, and hopefully creates a life-long change in their attitudes.**

One of the boys had a history of losing his temper, both in and out of school. At times he was frustrated with the way the nursery staff treated him, feeling that they were rude at times, particularly when the head of the nursery shouted at him for inadvertently opening a door at the Christmas Party that was out of bounds. This hadn't been explained to him prior to the incident, and he felt that she had publically humiliated him unfairly. Many of the other teens felt this was also the case, having witnessed the incident and they all felt that although Teens & Toddlers was teaching them more respectful communication that these ideals weren't being upheld in the nursery, where they felt both the toddlers and they

were receiving disrespectful interaction. Rather than take sides, the facilitators used the situation as an opportunity to deal with the discrepancy between ideals and the reality of life.

They processed the group's grievances, then moved on to address the staff's perspective, seeking to understand how challenging and possibly intimidating it might be for the staff, used to working with toddlers not adolescents, to have the project there for the first time. They then worked with the young man and the group, helping him to discover how he could move beyond his aggression and get clear about what kind of communication might help the situation rather than hinder it. This was a breakthrough for both him and the group, experiencing their support of each other and the excitement that comes from discovering new forms of behaviour that elicit different outcomes. The boy attempted to apologise to the Head and his peer, who would normally 'defend his friend', also apologised to the Head. This occurred just before the Christmas break and it was notable that the group came back to the project after the holidays happy and ready to work.

This capacity to develop empathy for 'the others' perspective is another unique part of the project and a vital one within the context of anger management. Seeking to see the conflict from both sides aids in developing understanding and finding mutually beneficial solutions. This type of maturity is vastly lacking in our communities today, largely dominated by a type of 'gang-warfare' mentality based on 'get them before they get you'. Opening up to seeing both sides to the situation helps young people take the negative behaviour they see around them less personally, and to encourage them to build bridges where previously they were burned.

Two of the boys were very angry with their absent fathers and they used the group to explore their feelings about this. One of the shared a memory of his father telling me at a young age 'here's £10 to go and play in the road and I hope a car hits you.' As explored in the previous section on Queen Mary's Nursery, working through these undigested emotions and attitudes **allowed them to become clear that they did not want to repeat their own fathering when they had children of their own (a common theme in families) and instead used group time to define what 'good fathering' meant to them. In particular they also explored the nature of being a strong man, and challenged their own assumptions that aggression and doing whatever is necessary to save face is not a powerful way to be in the world.** One of the boys in particular was a magnet for the toddlers with many hanging off his leg whenever he went in to the nursery. Discovering their strength in kindness and a responsible attitude was a big part of these boys experience of the project.

HARBINGER NURSERY

The facilitator at this project site was Jane Hopkinson, assisted by Marvin Barrett. There were eight participants.

This was quite a compliant and attentive group in comparison to the other project sites. The facilitators noticed that they were being very well behaved in the project but were reporting incidents of losing their temper at school. They therefore focused on anger management as a core topic, as did the other sites,

exploring the effects of sitting on anger, and how it can build up until it erupts. **In this respect, repressing grievances can be just as unhelpful as acting it out compulsively. Looking at ways to notice what was building and finding ways to address building aggression, was an important learning for these young people.**

One girl was being bullied at school and a few of the other course participants hung out with the bullies at school. Jane gave her individual attention that helped her explore her strengths and qualities, and with whom she bonded well. She also addressed some of the 'pay-offs' of being bullied, realising that much of it stemmed from being dragged from pub to pub by her mum who gave her little attention and from an absent father, all of which gave her a helpless and hopeless attitude to life. **This feeding of her self-esteem and feeling valued in a group that she might usually feel anxious in, gave her a new experience of herself and broke a cycle that had formed an unconscious identity of victimisation.** It is often the case that victims unknowingly re-create a bullying experience in whatever group they find themselves in by quietly alienating themselves. In an ideal world people would be kinder and encourage participation, however, society often reacts to this quiet opting out by feeling aggressive towards it, giving the victim yet another experience of victimisation. **The group learned a lot about this dynamic through exploring it and identifying the ways in which prejudice and judgements segregate and alienate people. This particular girl blossomed as result in the project. Her appearance changed and she developed the confidence to stand up for herself and have her voice heard.** Jane also noticed how bright she was and gave her regular positive feedback about her potential and capacity.

Using the project to develop social skills is another very important part of Teens & Toddlers. Many of the participants are lacking the capacity to relate in any kind of acceptable way, as their caretaking and school life has not provided them with these vital skills. Instead they develop a set of defensive behaviour designed to distract attention away from them (whether aggressively or by being invisible). This is a disastrous way to enter adult life, and learning to relate and communicate on even the most basic level is an absolute necessity on the project. The adolescents interactions with each other, nursery staff, toddlers' parents, toddlers themselves and the facilitators provides a variety of relationships in which to practice relating positively.

One of the curriculum units involves teaching the adolescents to use their imagination to develop a positive experience of an 'inner wise being' who can provide some of the necessary caring qualities that might be lacking in their external world. This is a commonly used technique in transpersonal psychotherapy, enabling people to discover and nurture the potential inside of them that hasn't been modelled or nurtured in the external environment.

This technique is rooted in a philosophy that people are not just defined by the caretaking they have had, but that we all have capacities that we can nurture no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in. This is a tremendously important attitude to bring to work with young people and challenges their often fatalistic beliefs that 'things will always be the way they've been in the past'. During this particular visualisation many of the teens

on this project had tears in their eyes, a couple having visualised important and supportive family members who are no longer available to them, either through death or geographical distance. All the teens finished the exercise feeling connected to a sense of wisdom inside of themselves that could guide them when life became complicated and difficult.

This is particularly important given these young people's backgrounds. For example, just in this group alone, one of them had attempted suicide recently and another had a mother dying of liver failure from her alcohol abuse. **Developing internal, as well as external relationships with trustworthy figures and qualities that provide support and strength at times of struggle is a necessity if they are to not just survive, but thrive in the world.**

This nursery in particular focused on the benefits of Teens & Toddlers to the toddlers that the teens work with. **One of the toddlers was very quiet, didn't speak to anyone around her in the nursery. By the end of the project she was speaking to her peers as well as her teen and was interacting much more actively. Another boy who had been initially unable to sit quietly and contain himself became more sociable and less overly energetic through his interaction with his teenager.** This is a story that is repeated time and again within the nurseries, as toddlers blossom under the care and individual attention that their teenage friends provide for them, just as the teenagers blossom under the attention that the project provides for them. There were lots of tears from the toddlers as the project ended, providing an important opportunity to have a 'good ending' rather than the experience of abandonment that many of the teens have. Not running away from the pain of endings, but rather seeing the pain as evidence of having had a special connection, and to honour that in various ways, such as card giving, present giving, and celebration, re-frames endings in a positive way. **Many of the young people have unconsciously come to avoid bonding with anyone as a way of avoiding the pain of further abandonment in their lives, believing that if they 'don't give a shit' that 'it won't hurt' when they are disappointed or let down 'again'.** This is another vital learning in Teens & Toddlers that gives them a positive experience of relating from beginning to end, seeing relationships as a cycle that has it's own unique challenges and joys at each stage.

Diary excerpts from the teenagers journals

Each teenager is required to make some diary entries as the project progresses in order to think about and express what is significant for them, and what they are learning. Many of the teens struggle with this, especially as literacy skills are usually very low, however their entries are very touching. ***Below are excerpts from three teenagers' progression through the project in their own words, that illustrates their developing relationships with their toddlers, their peers and the facilitators:***

First participant.

Week 3. 'Today I was assigned to be a special friend to a toddler. Her name is Suki. I found that she was very withdrawn to the rest of her peers and others that she spends her school time with. She didn't speak to me at all at first but I was told that she didn't speak to anyone, she found it hard to communicate with many people. She wanted to play many games, she seemed like a very active toddler. Suki started to speak to me a little later, she didn't say much but she said 'yes' and told me where she wanted to go.'

Week 4. 'Today I was with my buddy Suki. She didn't do much. All she wanted to do was cut out paper. It seemed like Suki really enjoyed doing this as I felt that it was boring and got very tired, but still I stayed there because this was what she wanted to do. Today a man called Steve came to speak to me. He was an MP and was alongside another of his colleagues. He seemed like quite a nice man. When we had finished in the nursery we came upstairs. We had to do a role-play. We all had the chance of being a rejected toddler to see how it felt. I enjoyed today working with the children. But I was very tired.'

Week 6. 'Today in the nursery we made Christmas trees. I helped Suki make hers then I was helping others after. After making the Christmas trees we tidied up! Then went over to the carpet where there was a girl (teenage staff). She was doing some Indian dancing. Me and C joined in, it was fun and I really enjoyed it!'

Week 8. 'Today I was with Suki. She was very active. All she wanted to do was play. I enjoyed today, I felt really excited to go into the nursery. I was also talking to M (*a male teen in the project*), we were talking about L. I think M understands how much I like L but still he taught me some things that I didn't fully know. I was very grateful to M and I will take his advice of not being up in L's face, I'm going to let him do the running because I'm not running anymore!'

Week 9. '.... I had a really good chat with Jane (*her Teens & Toddlers facilitator*). She helped me see a lot and understand a lot about myself.'

Second participant

Week 2. 'Today I played with many of the children and helped to do some clay numbers. I found that the children count better than I thought and also have many talents. I met many children but the ones that stick in my mind are Regan, Yan and Ellise. Ellise was the one I helped with the numbers. I also saw Connor the boy I met last time. He said he was digging for treasure and I thought to myself 'I used to do that'. Quotation for the week – "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that has." Also, when I was leaving Regan said for me to go back tomorrow. I said I might but now feel guilty for lying. She'd most probably forget me tomorrow. Also Ellise cuddled me before I left and said she'll see me next week.'

Week 3. 'Today I was introduced to my toddler called Lazikur. I personally thought getting him to trust me was hard because at first I asked him his name and he ignored me. I asked him again and he ignored me. Then I said, "oh please tell me your name" and he looked at me and said very slowly and quietly "Lazikur" so I thought "YES, it's a start, I'm actually getting somewhere". Next we was playing hide and seek with the other little kids and he held my hand to keep up with me running. I thought "YES", I was proud that I had gained trust off of someone I didn't know about 20 minutes ago. Lazikur liked playing with other Bengali boys, he wasn't very interested in little girls. At first I thought I was just going to give up but I didn't. It was also very hard because from last time everyone was coming up to me when I was focusing on Lazikur, so I did very good.'

Week 4. 'Today only the nursery children were in and I liked being able to play with everyone. I found that little children like to play mums and dads and everyone also liked playing on the apparatus and everyone likes different things. I played with lots of people played hide & seek and lots of children asked me to play and I think to myself "of course you can".'

Week 5. 'Today I liked working with Lazikur because he actually told me what he wanted to do, I suggested a few things and he told me if he wanted to do them. I also found it quite hard though because Lazikur doesn't look as if he is listening to me sometimes and I don't think he likes artistic stuff, he likes active stuff. He also was a bit sort of confused about what carpet he was on, but he was actually very clever when he put his mind to his work. I also attempted to learn him to tie his laces, he was listening, he tried and nearly did it.'

(following the Christmas holiday) 'I thought that everyone would forget me but they didn't.'

Week 7. 'Today was hectic, I did some maths with Lazikur. I was also on the carpets today with a few little girls, they were pretending to be my mum and 3 or 4 girls were doing my hair. I want to stick with Lazikur because at the end of the project I believe that I will get somewhere with him and he will end up being more confident and more social. One thing I know Lazikur likes is cars. He mentioned his dad has two silver cars.'

Week 9. 'Today was cool, I liked having a camera because I could take pictures of lots of people I liked, playing with Aisha, she said she loved me, I told her she couldn't and that she should love her mum and not me, I'm just her mate, but

she insisted she loved me still. Lazikur left the nursery unfortunately so I had to start a fresh and get to know a new boy who's obsessed with Scooby doo. His name is Vinn. He's good.'

Third participant

Week 3. 'Today I was assigned with my special friend that I have to get to know and pay special attention to. His name is Nuh, I'm not sure he likes me because he ignored me and ran away.'

Week 4. 'Today I was with my toddler Nuh, we played and I ran after him. We played with a puzzle and I helped him with his maths. Tia was crying so I cuddled her and she stopped soon after but she wouldn't tell me why was crying, I didn't want to ask her too many times. For me when Tia was crying I felt really sad but when I had to go I didn't want to leave her and she didn't want me to go.'

Week 6. 'Today I chased Nuh around the playground and he ran off somewhere else. I know he doesn't like me. He makes me feel angry when he ignores me.'

Week 7. 'Today NUH HUGGED ME! He likes me now and said I was his best friend. Before I got to the nursery I was feeling really down and tired but when I go to the nursery and saw the kids I felt energetic and happy. Two new people joined us today and me and Nuh made a picture of 3 bears lost in a jungle.'

One last quote that summarises the way in which Teens & Toddlers immerses the participants in the reality of parenting!

'I didn't enjoy toddler time today because I got pissed on.'

In the teenagers' own words

Below are quotes taken from the various questionnaires that the teenagers are given throughout the project. These questionnaires are an important part of the Units in the curriculum and both the questions asked and the teenagers' responses give a brief insight in to the breadth of reflection that the project asks the participants to engage with.

UNIT 1. What do I want to get out of Teens & Toddlers?

'To be able to communicate better with children of the younger age and to experience being a helper in the EYU.'

'I want to be able to understand how the mind of the child works and how they react to certain things.'

How do I feel about teenagers having babies?

'You need to be mature to be a good parent and able to dedicate your life to your children. You have to try to have a secure home and relationship with parents and partner.'

'I feel that when a teenager has a baby they won't be able to live a proper life'.

'In a way I don't really care as long as its not me, because at the end of the day they are throwing their life away because there is so much to do out there really.'

UNIT 2. Write about your experience of being with the toddlers so far. How has it felt so far?

'My experiences of being with my toddler so far is good as I feel like he wants to be my friend and he likes playing more active things.'

'When I'm with toddlers I feel more playful and mature because they look up to me.'

'I have learned that toddlers don't like doing what you tell them, they like doing what they want.'

How did it feel being a person that the toddlers looked up to?

'Being the person toddlers look up to can be hard but sometimes it feels good. The children respect you and you respect them.'

'It's like being a big brother or sister to them because they want you to help them and show you them things.'

'I feel very wanted and happy around them and I don't feel like I am not wanted because no one is talking to me.'

'It feels nice that someone else is looking up to you and listening to you and the children enjoy having someone big around.'

UNIT 3. What have I learned about communicating with toddlers?

'I have learned that you can't look down to the child, you have to be at their level and look at them when you talk. Don't use long words and put it in a way they understand.'

'That I have to be on the child's level to be able to communicate with them. To be enthusiastic and positive towards them. To be able to understand how they feel.'

'I have learned that toddlers want all the attention they can get and if you don't give it to them they can get angry.'

How can I show that I care when I am communicating?

'Look at the child while speaking and pay attention and look serious and if they have any questions answer them. But you have to look serious but not moany, you should be happy to make them happy too.'

'I show that I'm interested in what they are saying or doing. I listen to what they say and sometimes repeat it to make sure that's what they said.'

UNIT 4. What are some of my usual "triggers" to getting angry?

'Well, sometimes people do things that they know you would get angry for and that is basically what I get angry for. Also, if someone is constantly telling me what to do. And when people don't listen to what you are trying to say.'

'My usual triggers that get me are when someone is being rude to me or others.'

'Someone saying something or doing something that can hurt me.'

What are some of the ways I can imagine dealing with my anger that are not harmful to myself and others?

'Walk away, time out and sit by myself and calm down, count to five, think of happy things, turn the situation around and make it so I see what I'm missing by sulking and what I could be doing instead.'

'Listen to soul music to chill out.'

'Punch a pillow. Scribble on paper hard. Listen to old school slow jam in bed. Laugh it off. Turn the situation around.'

'Counting to ten and walking away.'

'I can go and sit somewhere so I can calm down and let some steam go.'

UNIT 5. Could using contraception be a way of valuing life?

'Yes, because you want freedom when you are young and by having a child young you could lose it.'

'I will be using contraception until I think that I'm ready to care for a baby.'

How could having a child as a teenager affect someone's life?

'Well everything would be harder, because you haven't got time for everything, but money-wise you can't get a job to earn money.'

'It can affect your education because you won't be able to go to school. You will not have a social life. No one might want to go out with you because you have a child already.'

UNIT 6. What are the qualities that you would look for in choosing someone to have a child with?

'Honesty, patience, loyal, reliable, considerate, not self-centered, not lazy or idle.'

'Responsible, caring, kind, understanding, trustworthy, affectionate, clever.'

'Being married. The one who will be there for me. Waiting until we are ready to have a child.'

What do you feel are the major responsibilities that come with being a parent?

'Financial stability, being employed, able to make sacrifices.'

'Financial, commitment, sacrifices.'

'Being there for the kid 24/7. Sacrifices. Commitment.'

UNIT 7. What potential do I see in the toddler that I am working with?

'Mountain climbing instructor, engineer.'

'Policeman, car salesman.'

'Playful, loves making stuff, active, loving, caring, good, funny.'

'Tia can be pushed in the right direction and then she could go far. A teacher could do that.'

What would a young person need in order that they might be able to really express their potential in the world? And how do I feel about teenagers having babies?

'You'd need to encourage people by hearing them and understanding them. If a teenager has a baby all the potential goes because your life would be focused on a child alone.'

'To be encouraged. To be given attention. To be listened to.'

'They would someone to listen to them. And they would need to think about what they are doing before having a baby.'

'Before you have a baby you have to be certain and sure that you're ready for a baby, make sure you're in a stable relationship with others around you to help.'

UNIT 8. What does "conscious contraception" mean for you and how might choose to prepare yourself for having a child sometime in the future?

'Yes I understand that it is important to be prepared. If you're prepared then you can make sure you are with the right person and you are in the right environment at the right times.'

'Make sure you choose the right partner to have a child with. Make sure you are financially prepared.'

What do you feel about the concept of "choice" regarding having a baby? How do you feel about messages that are shocking and hard to hear?

'The concept of choice is actually quite simple if you are preparing for a baby you need to be in the right state of mind. Shocking messages aren't easy and can be hard to hear, but are closer to real life.'

'It's important to plan. And shocking messages are hard to hear but effective.'

'Yes I do have a choice.'

'When the message is shocking sometimes it hits home more.'

UNIT 9. Write about what you feel a baby needs to experience in the first years of life.

'A baby needs a lot of love, affection and attention.'

'Love.'

What situation do you feel a parent ideally needs to be in when choosing to take on the responsibility of having a child?

'Stable relationship, regular income, and a supportive family.'

'Stable relationship, stable income, emotionally stable.'

'Has to be in a supportive, loving, caring and equal relationship.'

The role of the Clinical Service

Coaching/counselling sessions were offered to the teenagers on the project. These sessions were given on a one to one basis during toddler time, a session lasting for approximately 40 minutes by either a counsellor assigned to the project, or one of the facilitators.

The purpose of the sessions is to develop a greater degree of safety for the teenagers in the way they engage with the material on the course, and the issues that it might be raising for them. Many of the teenagers are in difficult life circumstances and need the extra support that the coaching sessions offer. It is a time for them to receive high quality, individual attention that also encourages them to focus on where they are going in their lives, what future directions appeal to them, and to teach them how to move towards those goals.

Providing concrete structures for them to begin working towards is a major component of encouraging the teenagers to delay pregnancy until after they have grounded themselves in work that can sustain and support them. Teenage pregnancy often results from the despair and low expectations that many of these teenagers have when considering their futures. Having a baby who will love them, and allow them to be supported by the State, is often the only goal that seems attainable. Enabling a sense of hope, developing the necessary skills to actualise those goals, and encouraging a sense of achievement through development of responsibility is key to addressing this.

The role of these support sessions is evolving, and this project is unusual in that the facilitator trainees all received counselling skills training which allowed them to offer good quality one-to-one sessions to the participants. The feedback from the trainees about this training was excellent, and expressed a need for development of the skills traditionally 'assigned' to counselling, but which in and of itself forms the basis for any good communication. COUI considers the role of 'counselling' to be one of a simple enhancement of the capacity to relate and the development of emotional literacy that forms the basis of all good relationships. In this respect, the facilitators, teenagers and toddlers are all developing good 'relationship skills' that involve the ability to listen well, relate to other's circumstances empathically, and to be able to reflect on and articulate one's own thoughts and feelings.

The one-one sessions offered by the counsellors and facilitators is simply another forum for the teenagers to be able to 'practice relationship' as well as to focus on themselves and their lives.

Project objectives

Teens and Toddlers is a practical teenage *pregnancy prevention* programme fostering, through intensive interaction with toddlers and classroom instruction, greater awareness of the reality of conception and of parenting for young people *long before unwanted pregnancies occur*.

The key objectives of the project are

- Educating young people about the realities of pregnancy and parenting in a practical and theoretical way.
- Teaching child development in such a way as to be immediately applicable whilst in the nursery and at home with their own young siblings (and hopefully much later as parents).
- Facilitating and eliciting a capacity to reflect on the impact that their words and behaviour have on others (particularly small children) and developing new, more helpful forms of behaviour around such issues as communication and discipline.
- Discussing and exploring the realities of teenagers' lives today: sex, drugs, peer pressure, in order to open up new possibilities and to engender a more informed and empowered sense of choice. Increased sexual responsibility by both males and females.
- Developing emotional literacy through teaching skills such as self-reflection, in order to heighten a sense of responsibility, ethical behaviour and the capacity to form healthy relationships.
- Increasing self-confidence and respect for self and others.
- Engendering an experience and understanding of the concept of consequences in their lives, whether in the way they use their power, anger and sexuality.
- Creating a sense of achievement through a successful relationship with the assigned toddler and through an in-depth work experience where they are treated as responsible young people by nursery staff, their own peer group and project leaders.
- Development of job skills and life planning.
- Preventing teenage pregnancy through direct experience of the enormous responsibility and work parenting involves, through interaction with the nursery children and discussion in class. The development of alternative goals to being pregnant, such as developing satisfying work and relationships.
- To give the toddlers who participated in the programme a positive experience of older role models.
- To provide sufficient individual support to students during and after the project to enable them to manage their lives more effectively and seek to make the fullest use of the programme.

- Citizenship skills through multi-cultural participation and promotion of an appreciation of difference and improved social behaviour.
- Crime prevention through anger management, work with awareness of choice and personal responsibility and future life goals.
- Training a group of local people experienced in Youth Work, to be future Teens & Toddlers facilitators, to ensure sustainability of Teens & Toddlers in Southwark.

Project outcomes

- In terms of the biggest stated aim of the project, that of pregnancy prevention, end of project questionnaires concluded that participants now wished *to delay pregnancy until at least 21, allowing them to parent from a more secure base financially and emotionally.* The questionnaires reflected the fact that participants had integrated the learning that children are extremely demanding and that they would effectively be giving over their freedom, time and energy to that child and would therefore need to be as supported as possible themselves before embarking on such a huge task.
- *The programme gives participants an experience of being responsible young adults, treated with respect by nursery staff and Teens & Toddlers staff.* For many this is perhaps the first time they have experienced a sense of success and achievement, personally and academically. This provides self-confidence to move towards goals in their lives that are meaningful to them, at a pivotal time in their lives.
- *The pragmatic nature of the course provides participants with an opportunity to test their opinions and behaviour in the world, to develop a sense of their ability to be reliable to themselves and others, and to define a set of values by which they can live.* In this respect the project enables them to individuate in productive and realistic ways, creating a much higher likelihood of them having a sense of the contributions they are able to make, and wish to make.
- All the participants evidenced *significantly improved communication skills, capacity to deal with conflict, to be effective members of a group, to take initiative and to caretake others as well as being responsible for themselves.*
- *Increased motivation based on improved optimism and confidence* that evolves out of a sense of success by sticking with the project and finishing it. And through the integration of the positive feedback received from facilitators and nursery staff.
- Manifold benefits to local community as ties and connections are developed between the young people and the nursery children and staff, *creation of a sense of 'belonging' so that the teenagers have a sense of being able to contribute to, rather than abuse, their community.*
- *In areas such as anger management, communication skills and how to handle conflict, the Project provides concrete and practical skills for more constructive and empowering behaviour.* Many of the Project participants

have problems as victims of bullying or are bullies themselves. Often their behaviour is working against them at school and in the home. Throughout the programme, the teenagers are supported to address what triggers their reactions and to explore alternative strategies for dealing with these reactions. Many of these young people do not realise that they have choice regarding their emotions and reactions, and many feel helpless to deal with what they experience as facts of life: violence and danger. The 'do it to them before they do it to you' mentality is one that needs to be challenged in a way that uses the young person's own goals as the reference point. Again, not to dictate to them, but to enable them to see that their behaviour and choices can either work for them or against them. This gives the young people much more of a sense of control in the world and ownership of their behaviour and choices.

- *The hope is to make Teens & Toddlers an accredited training programme* so that students can receive credit for their participation on the Project, allowing many young people to participate who would otherwise be unable to due to their study commitments at school.

The future for COUI (UK) in Tower Hamlets

- COUI hopes that we will develop the initial connections made with the schools and nurseries that have participated in the first project, maximising the potential for infusing the educational systems within the borough with the benefits of Teens & Toddlers, in terms of the problematic behaviour of its students. Teens & Toddlers has much to offer the community in terms of turning around teenagers who would otherwise continue to act out unhelpfully, causing distress and strain on the system as they grown up. The more Teens & Toddlers is followed up with further projects, the more likely the benefits will be solidified.
- The aim is that Teens & Toddlers become an accredited scheme. The goal being for COUI to apply for accreditation on the National Qualification Framework over the next two years.
- COUI has received a grant from ARK with the intention of providing sustainability and development of Teens & Toddlers throughout London and Nationwide. Specifically to focus on increasing and improving service delivery through the monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness.
- It is COUI's deep hope and intention that the networks and connections between COUI and Tower Hamlets will continue to strengthen and flourish.

Biographies of project leaders

The core project team, who are developing the project, clinical services and self-development programmes are:

- Diana Whitmore MAEd, Director of Development and former Chief Executive of the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust, one of the UK's leading trainers of counselling and psychotherapy. She is also a UKCP registered psychotherapist and has been responsible for training and curriculum development of accredited programmes for 25 years, providing professional training and development for counsellors, psychotherapists and youth workers. Her core focus in COUI (UK) is to develop the expansion of Teens & Toddlers programmes to other Boroughs, and to run the first Revitalising Learning self-development group in Greenwich.
- Stacey Millichamp MA, a UKCP registered psychotherapist. She has experience working in curriculum development within the voluntary sector, as well as providing consultancy to providers and clients of Employee Assistance Counselling. She is currently working as a psychotherapist with adults and young people and supervising other psychotherapists. Her core focus in COUI (UK) is to create and develop the clinical service providing counselling for young people in both the Teens & Toddlers programmes and within schools in Greenwich and Southwark.
- Peter Hein, a Psychosynthesis trained counsellor and trainer with extensive experience working with young people and children. He has been a facilitator with World Youth Service and Enterprise since 1996, is a manager and supervisor for Next Step Care Management Ltd teaching young people in the Care system independent living skills and has worked with Family Group Conferences liaising with Social Services to devise strategies to ensure the safety of children. His core focus in COUI (UK) is to manage and facilitate Teens & Toddlers programmes in Southwark and other Boroughs and he ran the first Revitalising Learning self-development group in Greenwich with Diana Whitmore.
- All other facilitators on the project are either qualified counsellors with experience of working with groups, or are experienced youth workers.

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- Helen James, Sex Education Advisor for Tower Hamlets who was our valued contact person for setting the project up.
- The wonderful facilitators Duncan Bain Smith, Janet Currier, Jane Hopkinson, Michael Muntinga and Val Harris who generously donated so much of their time way beyond the call of duty.
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- The Psychosynthesis & Education Trust for its access and support to its student population, and the provision of meeting rooms for training and supervision.
- Diana Whitmore for the endless hours of organisation she poured in to making the project happening, and for the continuing inspiration of her vision and its driving force within COUI.
- Stacey Millichamp for her establishment, management and supervision of the clinical service and behind the scenes organisational input.
- Peter Hein for his generous donation of many hours organisationally and in his contribution of people and managerial skill to the running of the Tower Hamlets project.
- Jennie Hurley for her wonderful administrative input, and her ability to spin several plates at once.
- Andrew McDowell for his on-going development of research materials, all designed to enhance the effectiveness of Teens & Toddlers and to bring it more widespread recognition for its impact on young people.
- Laura Huxley, without whose vision and commitment there would be no Teens and Toddlers.

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Summary of Units

UNIT 1 INDUCTION OF TEENS

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this first session is for us to get to know each other and begin to build our group as a safe and trustworthy learning community, for you to get to know what the *Teens & Toddlers* project is about and introduce you to the nursery and little people.

UNIT 2 WHAT IS A TODDLER?

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this Unit is to explore the definition of a 'toddler', to understand the developmental milestones – important stages and factors in child development - in order to know better how to be with toddlers and children. This will foster 'parenting skills' as well. We also will develop an empathetic idea of what it means to be small and relatively powerless.

UNIT 3 CARING AND COMMUNICATING

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this session is to establish the basics of effective communications with toddlers. This will enhance communication skills for all relationships as well. We will also learn about the life stage, 'body being' that a toddler is primarily identified with to learn the postures and 'body language' which support good communication and relationships.

UNIT 4 SELF-VALUING AND SELF ASSERTION

Purpose of this Unit

It is an aim of *Teens & Toddlers* to empower young people to learn to modify their own anger responsiveness and moral reasoning and to express their anger in more appropriate and acceptable ways. Many young people today seem skilled in fighting, bullying, intimidating and shaming others; however they are frequently inadequate in more socially desirable behaviours such as negotiating an appreciation of differences, dealing appropriately with accusations and responding effectively to failure, teasing, rejection or anger.

UNIT 5 CONSCIOUS CONTRACEPTION

Purpose of this Unit

This Unit will look at relationships in general, and sexual relationships specifically. It aims to investigate the many issues involved in sexual relationships: the pressures, the desires, the misinformation and the importance of contraception. How does a teenager determine what is right for him or her self? Our primary needs in relationships: the need for love and the need for self assertion or affirmation lie at the bottom of much of our behaviour. This Unit will address these fundamental relational energies.

UNIT 6 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTING

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this session is to begin to explore the importance of parenting as well as the skills of parenting. We will also introduce the idea that *preparing for conception* is possibly the most important act a parent will make. This will include developing an understanding of the value of fathers both in a child's life and in relationship with the mother. Preparation for conception and understanding the importance of good parenting needs to happen on many levels: the quality of the relationship between the father/mother, the physical and emotional health of both mother and father and their life situation and circumstances.

UNIT 7 HUMAN POTENTIAL

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this session is to explore human potential – to recognise that we can aspire towards our potential in a realistic way. To use the writing of a resume as a tool for self-examination and to develop an objective sense of yourself and your fellow students. Who are you and who would you like to be? To also explore how we can have an impact on a toddlers development of their potential, by exploring the impact of the environment and child-rearing styles on a toddler.

UNIT 8 CONSCIOUS CONCEPTION

Purpose of this Unit

This Unit aims to introduce the physiological aspects of conception and pregnancy, beginning with fertilisation and moving through nine months of foetal growth. The damaging effects of drugs, alcohol and environmental toxins is a paramount concern for a pregnant woman. This Unit explores the latest scientific research on how remarkably intelligent a growing foetus is and how the parent's emotions, thoughts and actions impact the baby's physical and emotional health.

UNIT 9 WELCOME TO THE WORLD!

Purpose of this Unit

This Unit has the purpose of investigating the development of the newborn human; understanding the complex processes underway in the newborn brain: sensory development, parent/infant bonding and early forms of communication.

UNIT 10 OUR LIFE/YOUR IDENTITY

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this Unit is for you to document your life through the pictures you have taken of important people, places and things, which matter and are meaningful to you. Who are you in the world? We will share our 'stories' with each other as a means of affirming our unique identity and discover the uniqueness of each other.

UNIT 11 THE FIRST YEAR OF LIFE & DISCIPLINE STYLES

Purpose of this Unit

The purpose of this Unit is to learn to understand a baby's developmental milestones in the first year of life and how to support these milestones. What can a young parent be aware of in terms of optimal growth and well-being? We will explore how, as the baby grows, setting boundaries and discipline become foreground issues. Discipline styles will be taught which empower, rather than minimise the young being.

UNIT 12 COMPLETION AND GOODBYES

'The Life of Your Dreams'

Purpose of this Unit

The first purpose of this Unit is to complete the experience with toddlers and for each student to say a healthy goodbye to the toddler he or she has been with during this time. A second purpose is for students to look to the future – to orientate themselves by envisioning time lines – short, medium and long term goals. Students will learn the importance of recognising the relationship between choices/actions and their consequences.