



Teens and Toddlers in Greenwich 2004

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)

The Equitable Charitable Trust

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.

In the practical guide for schools; "Emotional Health and Well-Being" (p.116-118), which was inspired by the collaborative research for the DfES on Emotional Health and Wellbeing for all in secondary schools, it states the following:

"We would have no hesitation in recommending the Teens and Toddlers project to any local authority who is serious about addressing the issue of teenage pregnancy in a rigorous and comprehensive way. The secondary benefits of the project are in the area of emotional literacy and we've seen its effectiveness on this level as well."

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, the first projects in Tower Hamlets and Islington, and the fourth project in Southwark. 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 a National 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 June 2004 project in Greenwich.. ***The project was funded by the Greenwich Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Greenwich Education Action Zone and the Vulnerable Children's Grant and the Equitable Charitable Trust. It drew 22 adolescents from Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls, Kidbrooke School, Thomas Tallis School, and Plumstead Manor School. Two of the groups operated for ten weeks, meeting twice a week for three hours, hosted by MiddlePark Primary School Nursery and Gallions Mount Primary School Nursery. Another group operated for 20 weeks, hosted by Holy Family RC Primary School 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 are hiring 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 grants from ARK and The Equitable Charitable Trust, 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.
- A clinical service has been established since September 2002 offering student counsellors placements in Teens & Toddlers projects and in schools in Greenwich, Southwark, Islington 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 fifth project within Greenwich 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 four pilots in the UK were run in conjunction with Greenwich unit for pregnancy prevention, EAZ and Early Years. The first pilot for Southwark was run in Autumn 2002, in conjunction with The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Local Implementation Fund and the second and third projects included a training of local people as Teens & Toddlers facilitators, funded by The Learning and Skills Council.

Outline of the project

The fifth Greenwich Teens & Toddlers ran in the February – June Term of 2004, with one group of the project continuing through to the first few weeks of July 2004. There were four participating schools, Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls, Kidbrooke School, Thomas Tallis School, and Plumstead Manor School. Three nurseries hosted the project; Middle Park Primary School, Holy Family RC Primary School, and Gallions Mount Primary School.

Two of the projects ran for 10 weeks, meeting twice a week for two hours of toddler time and one hour of classroom input and one project is running for 20 weeks, and, 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 three project sites

MIDDLE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY

The facilitator at this nursery was Miranda Taggart with Jennifer Hurley as her assistant. This project site had eight adolescents assigned.

Miranda and Jennifer were very complementary about this nursery. There was an excellent working relationship with the project and there was particularly a deep understanding from the staff towards the teenagers that needed a lot of support and direction in managing their interaction and relationships with the toddlers. The teens were nervous at first, as they usually are, but gradually lost their inhibitions and began bonding with their toddlers. **Miranda 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 building a strong container and developing trusting relationships. 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 behaviours destined to alienate them from their environment.**

One of the major factors in creating a positive behavioural shift in the group was that Miranda and Jennifer remained positive, consistent and firm. They were able to be in contact and stay in touch with the group, interacting with the teenagers with positive regard and respect, in spite of the group's "acting out" behaviours.

They did not reject the teenagers, as possibly had been done in the past by other authority figures. This “modelling” allowed the teenagers to begin mirroring the facilitators and to experience a different way of relating. One teenager reported that these T&T experiences had changed her and her ability to choose how she behaved with others. She reported proudly that she had not had a “fight” with her mother for over a month.

Another theme that seemed valuable to the teenager’s learning experience was exploring their attitudes /beliefs towards making mistakes. When teenagers are learning something new, it is important to recognise that they can make mistakes in that process. Miranda and Jennifer drew out the feelings that the group experienced when making a mistake and it became apparent that no one chooses or rushes out to make a mistake. They explored what would be an empowering relationship to a mistake. The teens concluded that a mistake was an action that “didn’t work” and that could have a negative consequence. They learned that they could reframe blame, being at fault, and excuses by naming it, taking responsibility for it, exploring it, apologising, making amends and forgiving themselves. They then looked at what they could put into place so that it didn’t happen again. This process reframed a mistake from being bad/wrong into a new opportunity / possibility and the realisation that nobody was born “perfect”.

The teenagers reported getting a lot out of the project. One girl continued doing further work at home and then sharing the results of what she had done with the group and facilitators.

Another teenager who was on the edge of exclusion from her school, increasingly demonstrated a high degree of commitment and ability to relate with her toddler, the nursery staff and the facilitators. When she was acknowledged and praised by the nursery staff, she requested that they inform her school so that she would not be excluded.

The teens received one to one counselling/support sessions. The counsellor reported how once trust had been established, they were anxious to share, they “blossomed” and were able to make some big changes in their lives.

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.

GALLIONS MOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY

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

There were also acknowledgements for the Nursery, particularly for the Head teacher, and Administration. In the Nursery, it was reported that the staff were encouraging and supportive.

However some of the teens in the group were frustrated with the way they perceived the reception class staff treating them, feeling that they were confrontational at times, particularly when there were incidents of shouting and authoritarianism.

They all felt that although Teens & Toddlers was teaching them more respectful communication that these ideals weren't being upheld in the reception class, 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 group, helping them to discover how they could move beyond the aggression and get clear about what kind of communication might help the situation rather than hinder it. This was a breakthrough for the group, experiencing their support of each other and the excitement that comes from discovering new forms of behaviour that elicit different outcomes.

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.

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.

Moreover, there was an incident of bullying between 2 girls, who had a long standing rivalry. in form of ridicule, humiliation and spreading rumours. With the exceptional support of Linda Bursten from Plumbstead Manor School the facilitators over a duration of 4 weeks addressed the issue of bullying with the individuals and the whole group. The building of a sympathetic culture was created by the "handling" of the confrontation, raising awareness, identifying co-operative values and increase the groups social skills by openly exploring ways in which to resolve interpersonal difficulties.

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 care-taking and school life has not provided them with these vital skills. Instead they develop a set of defensive behaviours 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 care-taking 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.

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.

Duncan also worked with a teen and the group around issues of separation and loss.

A teen had established a very close and bonding relationship with a toddler and was then told that he would need to work with another toddler. Duncan worked with the teen's sadness, confusion, anger and disappointment by acknowledging his experience and finding creative and healthy ways of dealing with his loss.

This theme was also highlighted when the counsellor of the group shared that her father had died during the running of the project. This sharing seemed to enable a teen to share her father's recent death and to discuss her feelings of bereavement.

There were one to one counselling sessions and the counsellor reported that the teens had gained immensely in confidence and were willing to share openly. She was particularly touched by the vast potential in the teens and how the project seemed to make a real difference in their lives. For example, one teen reported a dramatic change in her relationship with her siblings for whom she was the primary caretaker. The teens father felt it important to contact COUI UK to affirm this change.

HOLY FAMILY RC SCHOOL NURSERY

The facilitator at this nursery was Janet Currier, assisted by Russell King. There were six participants.

Due to some last minute logistical difficulties, Holy Family RC School Nursery kindly agreed to take on the Teens and Toddlers Project at very short notice. Janet and Russell were aware of the need to develop good relations and clear communication with nursery staff in order to establish and align the project as a useful and respected aspect of the nursery's working culture. Janet was particularly pleased with the help, encouragement and support that the Reception gave the project.

Developing positive relationships with the participating schools and nurseries, and working with the teaching and nursery 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. 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 enculturing the schools and nurseries with the Teens & Toddlers approach.

At the request of one of the participating schools the project was run as a twenty week programme with the students meeting once a week (rather than twice a week) over the spring and summer term. It is our feeling that this led to some attendance problems with year eleven teens attending, especially since all of the year elevens entering the project had attendance issues at school and were not required to attend school for most of the summer term. Four of the teens, all year eleven's dropped out of the programme, one because she moved and the other three left in the summer term. Time was spent liaising with the school trying to encourage the students to complete the programme but unfortunately personal issues affecting the teens meant that they were not able to finish.

For the two remaining students however, the project has been very meaningful, and in many respects they have both benefited greatly from the additional level of support and attention that the facilitators were able to give them. One of the students was in care and experiencing serious disruption in her fostering arrangements. During the programme she ran away from her carers and on her safe return, reported to the facilitators that one of the main reasons she had come back was because she wanted to see her toddler and did not want to let him down. For this young person in particular, the facilitators feel that the longer programme has provided much needed continuity and important weekly contact with supportive adults during a difficult time in her life. Developing the relationship with her toddler has helped her to gain confidence and to take on more and more responsibility in the classroom. She now undertakes the all-important 'Story time' session at the end of the school day, engaging and entertaining the whole reception class. She is valued by staff and children alike and the importance of this experience, given her life history, cannot be underestimated.

Using the project to develop social skills is another very important part of Teens & Toddlers Project. 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.

Another important aspect of the project has been to help the girls develop skills in relating to others. This kind of development is very significant to the teens whose home and school life has in the most part not provided them with much capacity to relate well to others. Learning to relate and communicate on even the most basic level is a key element of the Teens and Toddlers project. At Holy Family, Classroom time spent on exploring ways to deal with anger, to give and receive feedback and to exercise self assertion and self valuing has been exercised on a practical level by the students' experiences in the group and in the nursery. There has been space to express anger and disappointment at others non- attendance in the group and to have the validity of these feelings affirmed. In relationship with the facilitators the teens have had an opportunity to have their more defensive 'acting out' behaviour reflected back or challenged in a safe containing way, and to begin to understand the way in which more negative ways of relating can sabotage learning and growth for them. Developing relationships with the nursery staff has again provided the girls with a place to practice positive ways of relating. They have had to negotiate with staff, assert their needs, and have been met with adult respect. They have received support and encouragement from staff and other trainees when they found the project challenging. An important part of their learning has been to learn to hear and accept positive feedback.

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' response 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?

'I want to learn to be with little children, so maybe one day I could become a good parent.'

'I want to get an idea of what it would be like raising a child and to get experiences in working with children.'

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'.

"Well I would not have babies at my age. It is all right if I was 20 at least."

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 has been quite emotional because one toddler in particular called Ivory, has been quite attracted to me and told me some moving thing.'

'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?

"It feels good to be someone they look up to, but you have responsibility to be good to the kids and not swear in front of them."

'It gives me a sense of responsibility as I feel I have to look after and help them! I also like being looked up to, it makes me feel wanted!'

"I felt more noticed than what I am now, because I am one of the youngest in the family and Ivory told me personal things and I feel quite special and happy that she can speak to me and look up to me."

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

"I have learnt different techniques of helping them feel good about themselves and be more independent."

'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.'

"To bend down so you can hear them talk, talking to them, and not talking down to them."

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

" Talking to them in a lovely way, smiling, touching and eye contact."

"Showing them affection by keeping eye contact and letting them know you are listening to what they have to say."

"Being gentle."

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.'

"Being teased, arguments and something being stolen."

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 10 , walking away, taking deep breaths and ok to cry.'

'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?

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

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

.”Yes it is because it protects you from getting any diseases or getting pregnant.”

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

“Your children can have a life if you have an education.”

‘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?

“Trustworthy, reliable, someone who will always stick by you and the child. Someone who shows their love.”

“Someone caring and kind, generous, loving and someone who can provide.”

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

”Looking after the family and earning money.”

‘Financial, commitment, sacrifices.’

‘Being there for the child, responsible and reliable.’

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

“The potential I see in Tiangi is he could go into art because he is creative and enjoys colouring , he could also be a builder because he mostly likes drawing houses.”

“In my toddler I can see that they spend a lot of time building things and using their imagination. They would be good as an artist, builder or author.”

“Nosy, confident, outgoing, helpful, caring, artistic and clever.”

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?

“Not to put them down and also to tell them how much potential they have.”

“Things a young person needs to reach their potential, are encouragement and support.

“I think teenagers should not have babies because it is too much responsibility and we are just still kids ourselves.”

“I don’t think it’s a good idea to have a baby, as teenagers miss out on lots of their life.”

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

“Having a trustworthy partner, being financially stable, giving up bad habits for the baby’s upbringing, such as smoking drinking and drugs.”

“To me it means preparing for a baby so that I am financially stable with a stable relationship.”

‘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?

“ I think it is better to choose, as you can plan the future and pick a partner who will stick by you and the baby.”

“ I think you should have a life, then have a baby. You should choose when you are ready.”

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

“Having a loving family, playing, sharing, fun and a good environment.”

“A baby needs to experience love and encouragement.”

“That you love them, for them to feel safe, being touched and talking to them.”

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

“Financially stable, emotionally stable, and in a loving, trusting relationship!”

“They need to have a loving partner, a place to live, a job to pay bills, and need lots of support from each other.”

UNIT 11. What is your understanding of the difference between discipline and punishment?

“I understand that discipline helps the child to understand and punishment not only confuses the child but it mentally scars them.”

“Punishment is beating them when they have done something wrong, discipline is telling them no and showing a better way.”

“Discipline is an explanation of why you can’t do something, and punishment is making you child pay in some way for what they have done.”

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 ones 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 in 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 Greenwich

- COUI hopes that we will further develop the initial connections made with the schools and nurseries that have participated in the fifth 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 year.
- 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 Greenwich 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, MA Economics, Post Graduate Diploma in Psychosynthesis, Counselling. He is a trainer with extensive experience working with young people and children. He has been a facilitator with World Youth Service and Enterprise since 1996, 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 the management and quality assurance, of the Teens & Toddlers programmes in Southwark, Greenwich, Islington and Tower Hamlets, and other and to run 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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Acknowledgements

COUI (UK) would very much like to thank:

- Middle Park Primary School Nursery, Holy RC Primary School Nursery, and Gallions Mount Primary School Nursery, who hosted the project.
- Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls, Kidbrooke School, Thomas Tallis School, and Plumstead Manor School, who provided the participants for the project.
- The Greenwich Teenage Pregnancy Unit, Greenwich Education Action Zone, the Vulnerable Children's Grant and Equitable Charitable Trust, for funding the project.
- Jan Martin, Officer for Reintegration and Teenage Pregnancy, who was our valued contact person for setting the project up.
- The wonderful facilitators and assistants, Duncan Bain Smith, Janet Currier, Miranda Taggart, who generously donated so much of their time way beyond the call of duty.
- The assistants, Jennifer Hurley, Russel King and Kamali Allnutt, who also generously donated their entire time almost completely free of charge and without whom the projects could not have run.
- 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 skills to the running of the Greenwich 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 wide-spread recognition for its impact on young people.

- Laura Huxley, without whose vision and commitment there would be no Teens and Toddlers.