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Pioneering scheme aims to cut number of child pregnancies

Teaching teens - and tots

TEENAGE pregnancy levels could be cut thanks to an innovative new scheme.

By **PETER CRAIG**

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North East Lincolnshire is the first borough outside London to host the Teens And Toddlers initiative.

The course has a proven track record - with an almost 100 per cent success rate in preventing the number of teenage mums growing even higher.

In fact, of all the women who have completed the programme, 97.5 per cent did not get pregnant until they were over the age of 20.

It aims to improve sexual health among teenagers and show those aged 13 to 15 years the reality of looking after toddlers.

Schoolgirls from Witheringham and Havelock Schools were the first to be trained, working with toddlers at nurseries across the borough.

And the group of more than 30 students has just passed the 20-week course with flying colours.

They were rewarded for their dedication at a ceremony held at Yarborough Resource Centre.

Chairman of Teens And Toddlers, Diana Whitmore - known to members as "Granny" - praised the students.

She said the links between schools

and nurseries not only benefited teenage girls, but also the toddlers receiving one-to-one care.

Portfolio holder for Children's Services at North East Lincolnshire Council, Coun Margaret Cracknell, said: "It is not only about teenage pregnancy, it is social exclusion of young people who needed to have more inspiration and self esteem.

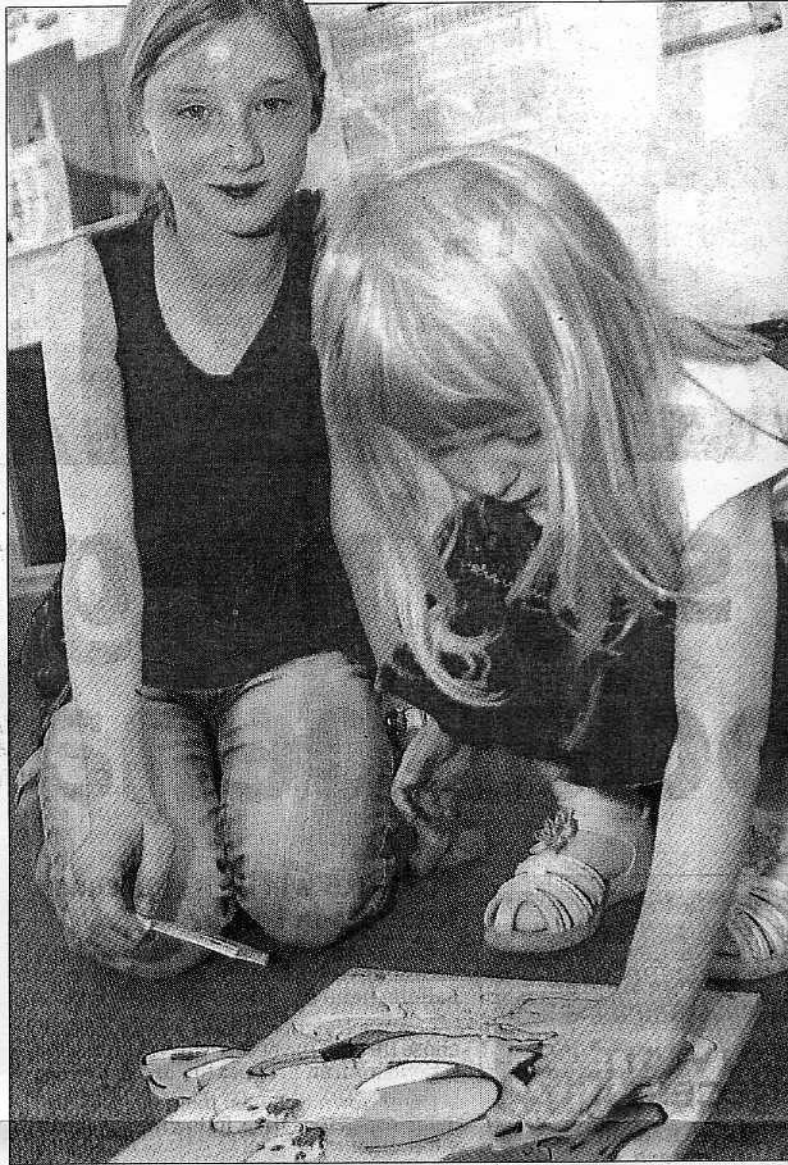
"It all goes hand-in-hand. The biggest problem with teenage pregnancies is personal development. This will help that."

Deputy head of centre at Nunsthorpe and Bradley Park nursery Sarah Forrester said: "It has been fabulous. There have been mums telling us they wished they had the scheme when they were younger."

One of the 30 students honoured was Patsy Robertson (14), from Grimsby.

Her citation hailed her "a 'lovely, caring nature' to whom toddler Harry had taken really well.

She said: "I enjoyed playing with Harry. I get close to him and read to him and play with trains. I am used to it with my four nephews and niece."



● Patsy Robertson (14), who took part in the Teens And Toddlers programme, pictured with toddler Tia Hartley (three).

Pupils welcome the opportunity to learn

SHOCKING figures that one in 10 teenage girls in parts of Grimsby were already mums or pregnant, fuelled calls to provide condom machines in schools last year.

And the Grimsby area's world ranking for teenage pregnancies put the UK second only to the USA.

North East Lincolnshire is in the top 10 in the UK.

Latest surveys showed

aged under 18 in North East Lincolnshire.

The second highest ward figure in 2003 was seen in East Marsh, where there were 69 conceptions during that year.

Teens And Toddlers student Kayley Scott (15), of Havelock School, Grimsby, said: "It has been a great experience. It teaches you how to understand kids."

Lizzie Wraith (14), of Havelock, was hailed as a



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