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To: LA Chief Executive
PCT Chair
Director of Children's Services
Director of Public Health
Lead Member for Children's Services

28 January 2009

Dear Colleague,

As we're sure you are aware, your local teenage pregnancy rate in the first three quarters of 2007 is higher than the corresponding quarters in 2006. Unless there is a significant rate reduction in the final quarter of 2007, your annual 2007 under-18 conception rate will be higher than it was in 2006. Analysis of the national data shows that the increase in the quarterly 2007 under 18 conception rate is due to a rise in conceptions ending in abortion; conceptions ending in a birth have remained static.

We understand that in some local areas this is a reversal of earlier good progress on reducing teenage pregnancy rates and whilst a minority of areas are still ahead of the trajectory needed to achieve your 2010 conception rate reduction target, we are sure you share our concern about the increases to date in 2007.

We are writing to invite you to consider how you might strengthen delivery of your local strategies, and how developments at a national level can support you.

First, it is essential that new funding provided in the PCT baseline allocations to improve access to effective contraception has maximum impact on reducing your under 18 conception rates. The importance of promoting choice of all contraceptive methods, including Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC), and reducing repeat abortions has been highlighted in the NHS Operating Framework for 2009-10. Separate letters have gone to schools and FE colleges in your area, encouraging them to talk to PCTs about locating contraceptive and sexual health (CASH) services in education settings, which are often more accessible to young people and where there is evidence of stronger engagement with services by vulnerable young people, young men and BME groups.

Second, the decision to make Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) statutory will raise its profile in schools and will ensure that all young people receive a more consistent offer. However the legislation will not take effect for some time and so it is important that we make progress on implementing the other recommendations made by the SRE review steering group. The letters we have sent to schools in your area have highlighted

the actions they could take now, including:

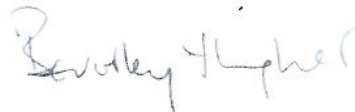
- developing the skills and confidence of staff who deliver PSHE, for example through participation on the national PSHE CPD Programme;
- encouraging schools to seek the views of young people on the effectiveness of their current SRE programmes – in particular through using the SRE pupil audit toolkit referenced in the SRE review report;
- helping schools to build partnerships with external partners – PCTs, sexual health services, Youth Services and the voluntary sector – who can support delivery of schools' SRE programmes; and
- investing – including at a local area level - in resources to support schools' SRE delivery.

Finally, we have drawn up a menu of support which is available to you to help strengthen your strategy (Annex A). Your Regional Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator in the Government Office will be happy to discuss what further support you may need to accelerate progress.

We know you are very aware that teenage pregnancy is a key issue of social exclusion and health inequalities that can significantly limit young people's chance to fulfil their potential. It is clear that strong local delivery of teenage pregnancy strategies brings down rates but that this is a complex issue which requires effective sustained partnership working and strong leadership from you. We look forward to your continued support in addressing this important issue.



DAWN PRIMAROLO MP
MINISTER OF STATE



BEVERLEY HUGHES MP
MINISTER OF STATE

cc: Chair of Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board, Local Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, Regional Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, Director of Children and Learners and Regional Director of Public Health