



Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0870 0012345 dcsf.ministers@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

**To Secondary School/PRU:  
Head Teachers  
Principals**

28 January 2008

Dear Colleague,

Steady progress has been made in recent years in reducing England's high rate of teenage pregnancy. But data for the first three quarters of 2007 show that teenage pregnancy rates in your local authority area are higher than they were in the corresponding quarters of 2006. Unless there is a significant rate reduction in the final quarter of 2007, the annual 2007 data will be higher than 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.

The primary responsibility for helping young people make informed choices about sex and relationships must rest with parents who have the biggest influence on their children's well-being. Alongside parents, other services, in particular health services, and the Local Authority itself, have key roles to play. Schools also have an important contribution to make to local teenage pregnancy strategies, in particular through well-planned and effective programmes of sex and relationships education. We are writing to you to set out ways in which you can contribute, and to highlight the support that is available nationally and locally to help you. Ministers are writing in parallel to your Local Authority and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) about their contribution.

#### Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

As you will know, we recently announced our intention to make PSHE statutory, to raise its priority in schools and to ensure a more consistent offer to all young people. But as you will know, driving up the quality of SRE requires more than just changing its position in the curriculum. We therefore also agreed to implement a range of further recommendations that were proposed by the Expert Group that carried out the review of SRE in schools.

While the legislation that makes PSHE statutory will not take effect for some time, schools need to start to take action now so that they are in a position to meet the challenge of statutory PSHE, when it does. This is central to your drive to meet both your safeguarding and well being duty to pupils. Actions you could take now involve:

- developing the skills and confidence of your staff who teach PSHE, for example through their participation in the national PSHE CPD Programme;
- seeking the views of young people on the effectiveness of your current SRE programme – in particular through using the SRE pupil audit toolkit referenced in the SRE review report;
- building partnerships with external partners – PCTs, sexual health services,



department for  
**children, schools and families**

Youth Services and the voluntary sector – who can support delivery of your SRE programme; and

- investing in resources to support your SRE delivery.

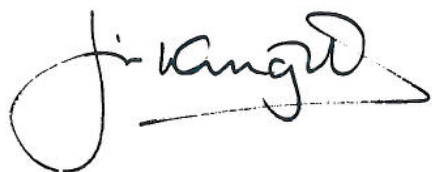
#### On-Site health advice drop-in services

A recent mapping exercise showed that 29% of secondary schools and 34% of PRUs have health advice services on-site, which includes contraceptive and sexual health advice and treatment. As well as helping to address key public health targets, there is emerging evidence that it can improve attendance and attainment and so support schools' core objectives:

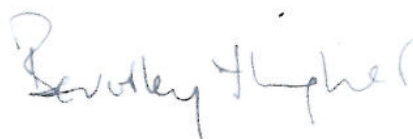
- It avoids young people having to take time off from school to attend appointments at services based in the local community;
- It helps avoid young women dropping out of learning altogether due to unplanned pregnancy;
- It helps young people address early any health concerns that may be affecting their ability to learn effectively; and
- It allows schools to demonstrate – for example to OfSTED – that it is meeting its obligations to support all young people to achieve the 5 Every Child Matters' outcomes and to promote pupils' well-being.

As part of the drive to improve young people's access and use of effective contraception, the Department of Health has provided additional funding for PCTs to ensure young people have access to high quality services in a range of settings, including through school-based services. If you are interested in exploring the potential to develop or extend a service in your school, you can contact your local Extended Schools lead or teenage pregnancy coordinator who will be able to discuss possibilities with your local PCT.

As you are aware, teenage pregnancy is a key issue of social exclusion and health inequalities that can significantly limit young people's chance to fulfil their potential. We know that effective partnership working in local areas can bring down rates. Schools have a unique and important contribution to make to local teenage pregnancy strategies and we look forward to your continued support.



**JIM KNIGHT**  
Minister for Schools



**BEVERLEY HUGHES**  
Minister for Children, Young  
People and Families