

Appendix 6: Invest to Save

Invest to Save - A Cost Benefit Analysis of Teenage Pregnancy and Substance/Alcohol Misuse

Teenage pregnancy, substance and alcohol misuse are key health inequalities and social exclusion issues. However there is also a strong economic argument for investment in services, as these issues cause a significant burden on public services.

Half of all under 18 conceptions occur in the 20% most deprived wards. Rates of teenage pregnancy and problematic substance and alcohol misuse are highest among deprived communities, so the negative consequences are disproportionately concentrated among those who are already disadvantaged.

The cost of teenage pregnancy to the NHS alone is estimated to be £63m a year. Benefit payments to a teenage mother who does not enter employment in the three years following birth can total between £19,000 and £25,000 over three years.

One fifth of births amongst under 18s are repeat pregnancies, when for every £1 invested in contraception saves the NHS £11 in costs for abortion services, ante-natal and maternity care. Estimates also suggest that every £1 spent delivering teenage pregnancy objectives saves approximately £4 to the public purse.

Teenage Pregnancy

Inequalities

- Teenage mothers are less likely to finish their education, more likely to bring up their child alone and in poverty, and require targeted support from a range of services.
- Over one third of teenage mothers have no qualifications and 70% are not in education, training or employment.
- This means that their children are generally at increased risk of poverty, low educational attainment, poor housing and poor health, and have lower rates of economic activity in adult life.
- Teenage mothers, fathers and their children are more likely to be in poor health and to live in poor housing. Teenage mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy and less likely to breastfeed, both of which have negative health consequences for their child.
- The infant mortality rate for babies born to teenage mothers is 60 per cent higher than for babies born to older mothers, and low birth weight babies are more common
- Teenage mothers have three times the rate of post-natal depression of older mothers and a higher risk of poor mental health for three years after the birth.
- Half of all teenage conceptions end with an abortion with all the emotional and sometimes physical trauma to the mother this can cause.

Drug and Alcohol Services

Every £1 invested in young people's drug and alcohol treatment saves the taxpayer between £5 and £8 over a lifetime. Apart from using drugs and alcohol, these young people often experience a range of other problems, including involvement in crime (shoplifting, theft, assault); being NEET (not in education, employment or training); or housing problems.

Even young people who are not problematic users but continue to use substances can cost public services between £21,300 and £45,100 over a 20 year period, and ill health or being NEET, can cost between £92,000 and £356,000 per person over their life course.

Just a 10% reduction in the young people most likely to become adult substance misusers in England would generate £48.8 million – £159.0 million *net* benefits over the course of their lifetime as remaining involved with substance misuse they are more likely to:-

- Leave school without qualifications and likely to be NEET
- Have poor employment prospects and likely to earn lower wages
- Be involved in frequent and serious crimes
- Suffer poor health outcomes
- Die prematurely

The Costs of Substance and Alcohol Misuse

- Cost of crime committed by young people misusing drugs - £4,000 per person
- NHS costs for treatment of drug/alcohol-related conditions - £179 per person
- Cost to the NHS of drug and alcohol related deaths of young people - £4.2m per year
- There is also the unknown cost of drug and alcohol related illness.

The Benefits of Treatment

- 55-65% reduction in offending behaviour
- 40% reduction in hospital inpatient admissions and deaths a savings of £1.8m
- Lower levels of acquisitive crime
- Improved wellbeing
- Likelihood of becoming an adult substance misuser decreases, which is significant, as 95% of teenage Class A drug users continue to use drugs in adulthood.

Summary

Evidence related to the immediate and long-term benefits of reducing teenage conceptions, and providing substance and alcohol misuse treatment for young people, shows that providing early intervention and prevention services for teenagers brings both health benefits and significant cost efficiencies.