**Support for Pregnant Students and School Age Parents**

This document has been produced to help educational establishments support pregnant students and school age parents to continue their education and, in doing so, enable them to reach their full potential.

**Responsibility of Schools**

Most cases of teenage pregnancy occur in year 11, a crucial time for taking GCSE’s, so it is important to ensure that young parents can complete their compulsory education and are able to go on to further education and training when they are able.

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 parents of teenage parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a full-time education suitable for their age, aptitude and to any additional educational needs that they may have. This may be through regular attendance at school, an alternative educational provision, or by education otherwise.

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 (inserted by section 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) requires all Local Authorities to make arrangements to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a suitable education. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/4>

Monitoring and maintaining the attendance of the individual pupil is, always, the responsibility of the educational establishment at which the pupil is on roll.

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the school makes **all reasonable attempts** to support the student in continuing to access on site education in line with the school’s attendance and inclusion policy.

It is important that the young parents have an input into what their educational support may look like and that their views are sought. Short-term absences should be allowed if necessary; if the health issues look like they may be longer-term then the school and the LA would need to consider appropriate alternative arrangements.

**The Equality Act 2010 and schools - Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities – May 2014**

**Protected characteristics**

It is unlawful for a school to discriminate against a pupil or prospective pupil by treating them less favourably because of their:

* sex
* race
* disability
* religion or belief
* sexual orientation
* gender reassignment
* pregnancy or maternity

**Pregnancy and maternity**

Protection for pupils from discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity in schools is covered in the Equality Act. This means it is unlawful for schools to treat a pupil less favourably because she has become pregnant or has recently had a baby, or because she is breastfeeding. Schools will also have to factor in pregnancy and maternity when considering their obligations under the Equality Duty (see chapter 5).

Local authorities have a duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable full-time education for any pupils of compulsory school age who would not otherwise receive such an education. This could include pupils of compulsory school age who become pregnant or who are parents. In particular, where pupils are unable to attend their previous school, the local authority would need to consider whether this duty is applied. ‘Suitable education’ should meet the individual needs of the pupil and must take account of their age, ability, aptitude and individual needs including any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities must have regard to statutory guidance on alternative provision and the ensuring a good education for children unable to attend school because of health needs.



**Antenatal appointments**

Pregnant teenagers are less likely to access maternity services and ante-natal care in early pregnancy. This can result in raised levels of medical complications and premature births. Pupils should be encouraged to attend ante-natal appointments and would be expected to evidence these as they would any other medical appointment during school time. The father’s positive involvement in a child’s early life is associated with a range of good outcomes for babies and children. A positive relationship between the mother and father is also a protective factor for post-natal depression. Time off during school time for young fathers- to-be to attend ante-natal appointments should be negotiated with the school. Alternatively, the school may recommend that young people ask for ante-natal appointments to be made after school wherever possible.

**Childcare**

Young parents under the age of 20 are entitled to funding to pay for childcare places and associated travel through ‘Care to Learn’.

<https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

**Reintegration into Education**

Evidence suggests that reintegration into education is more successful if the return is phased. The agreed process for reintegrating the young parent back into education should be, in all cases, in consultation with the student, their family if appropriate, the Education Access Team and the school. This may include work sent home, home tuition, a part- time timetable or attendance at an Alternative Learning Provider. Wherever possible, the young mother should be encouraged to return to her own school.

It is important to allow flexibility for the young parent to attend appointments, and to support attendance at young parents’ support groups. These are important in developing good parenting skills and ensuring good health of the baby. Attendance at these groups should be built into the Personal Education Support Plan.

**Breastfeeding**

Breastfeeding has a strong protective effect on the health of the mother and baby. Research suggests teenagers are a third less likely to breastfeed and teenagers who do initiate breastfeeding are much less likely than older women to continue. It is important that schools support the student’s choice to breastfeed. If the childcare is close to the school, the pupil should be allowed to leave at agreed times. The school should identify a private area to enable the student to express milk and provide suitable facilities to store milk during the school day.

**Accessing Support**

The aim of the school should be to keep the young person on roll, even if they may not be able to attend for a period of time. A designated member of school staff should be allocated to act as an advocate for the young person and assist them in taking responsibility for their continuing education.

Schools should have a clear confidentiality policy (DfE – Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education). Headteachers should ensure that all school staff and parents are aware of the policy and that school staff adhere to it.



If the student has not already done so, they should be encouraged to inform their parents/carers of the pregnancy. They may need some support to do this. School staff should always seek consent from a student before disclosing any information but should make it clear that they cannot guarantee confidentiality if there is a possibility that the young person or someone else could be harmed, for example, risk of harm to the young person and/or the unborn child.

Although the age of consent to sexual activity is 16, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 does not intend to criminalise young people of a similar age who have consensual sex. A child protection issue arises when there has been non-consensual sex or an exploitative relationship, particularly with an older person or someone in a position of trust. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, children under the age of 13 are considered of insufficient age to consent to sexual activity. If the student is under the age of 13 and pregnant, please contact the Children and Families Hub below.

If you have any safeguarding or child protection concerns, please contact the Children and Families Hub - 0345 603 7627 – if a child is at significant risk of harm please ask for the priority line.

In the case of a student under 16, if the nominated member of staff believes there is a child protection issue to be addressed, they should liaise with the schools designated teacher for child protection.

The nominated member of staff should make clear that they cannot guarantee unconditional confidentiality and that if confidentiality must be broken, the pupil will be informed first.

If the name of the father of the child has been disclosed, or he has revealed his identity, his needs and rights should also be taken into account. Schools should be supportive of both parents, acknowledging the additional needs that school age fathers and fathers-to-be may have. In some cases, both the mother and father- to- be may be attending the same school; this may cause difficulties if the relationship has ended, the pupil has rejected his responsibilities, or been excluded from his parenting role.

Please contact the Education Access Team for further support. Should LA support be required due to health needs, it is likely that we would consider a blended offer of outreach tuition alongside time spent in school. These plans will change according to health of mother and baby, will be reviewed regularly with all parties, and will be reviewed before and after the birth of the baby.

[provision@essex.gov.uk](mailto:provision@essex.gov.uk)

[medical@essex.gov.uk](mailto:medical@essex.gov.uk)

Main line number - 03330 322534

[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/796582/PHE\_Young\_Parents\_Support\_Framework\_April2019.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/796582/PHE_Young_Parents_Support_Framework_April2019.pdf)



**Examples of Attendance Codes**

Pregnancy is not an illness, therefore absence due to illness during pregnancy should

be recorded – I

Ante-natal appointments – M

Illness of baby – C

Baby medical appointments – C

Lack of childcare due to unforeseen circumstances - C

Failure to organise childcare, or refusal to access childcare place offered – O

Part time timetable – C

Attending alternative learning programme - B or D depending on the provision