

Connexions and NACRO Support Young Parents to fulfil their Full Potential

NACRO and Connexions are working together to improve opportunities, raise aspirations, self esteem, well being and integrate confidence for young parents aged 16 - 19 years in Sandwell.

Since March 2008 NACRO and Connexions have worked in partnership with local Surestart Children's Centres to successfully engage over 60 young parents and their families. This programme is funded by The Working Neighbourhood Fund and is also part of the 'Sandwell Teenage Pregnancy Strategy'. Moms and Dads attend and are welcomed and encouraged to access facilities in their area.

A pilot programme was created and first run from Uplands & Londonderry Children's Centre, Smethwick and following the success of this; new centres have come on board. The programme then opened in Murray Hall, Dudley Port followed by The Priory Children's Centre, Friar Park and the newest addition is opening in September at Spring Hill, Rowley Regis.

Young parents and parents-to-be have the opportunity to improve their literacy and numeracy as well as working towards a parenting qualification to improve their personal and social development. NACRO and Connexions are assisted by a host of local agencies and professionals to ensure the young parent has access to any advice and guidance they need and receive a seamless service.

The programme supports the young parents from pregnancy all the way through to being a parent and helps to develop the necessary skills for themselves and their children in line with the five 'Every Child Matters' outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy & Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

The programme includes sessions on:

- Drug & Alcohol Awareness
- Smoking, including during pregnancy
- Sexual Health & Relationships
- Nutrition & Healthy Living
- Welfare & Benefits

There have been several success stories as young people have progressed after completing the programme; one young Mom achieved a place at Wolverhampton University to study Business & Finance and another young parent who was struggling to cope with complications in their own life before their child was born has now gone on to improve their confidence, parenting

skills and independence so much that they moved from supported housing to their own accommodation and have just completed a Business Administration Apprenticeship.

All young parents on programme receive impartial Advice & Guidance from their Connexions PA Annette Ward to help make a positive progression into employment, training or further education.

Quotes from Young people on the course:

"I received a letter from my Connexions PA who told me about the course. Since I've been on this course I have gained a lot more confidence and really enjoy what I am doing"

"I hope this course continues as it is very useful for dads to be to get all the information they can to gain confidence as they prepare for fatherhood"

"This programme is very educational; it's also fun while you learn. I feel I have learned so much and it will help me a lot"

"All the NACRO staff are very trustworthy and supportive, if I have issues. The programme is interesting and has enhanced my knowledge"

NACRO and Connexions have ensured they engage earlier during the pregnancy stage and this has improved the number of young parents staying longer and accessing all the programme has to offer. Connexions make initial contact via mail shots, phone calls and home visits and if appropriate for the young parents they are referred to NACRO.

Thanks to the funding NACRO receives from The Working Neighbourhood Fund the young parents enjoy 'Aquanatal', Parent & Toddler swimming, day trips and Play & Stay sessions and most importantly the chance to meet other young parents or parents to be in their area and spend time with their children.



For further information please contact Annette Ward at Connexions on 07855 039207 or Lyndsey Whittaker at NACRO on 07717558296.

Photograph Left to right Anna Pearce, Vicky Holland, Jenny Spencer - NACRO Annette Ward – Connexions, Chris Hill, Nikki Abrahams