

Straight Talking, the leading UK charity working towards prevention of teenage pregnancy, comment on the ONS newly published figures for Conceptions in England and Wales (2012)

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Figures published yesterday show that teenage pregnancy figures have once again dropped by 10%, to the lowest rate since 1969. Hilary Pannack, CEO of Straight Talking UK's leading teenage pregnancy charity, says she is delighted that the teenage pregnancy rates are falling and that Government, Local Authorities and charities have worked very hard to achieve these results. However, she goes on to say, that we need to remember that these figures are two years old and since then, a great number of Local Authority staff with long experience and expertise, have gone.

High youth unemployment can make teenage parenthood seem like an attractive life choice in times of recession and with Local Authority service cuts, we need to drive even harder if we are to keep the rates from rising again.

We cannot afford to be complacent about these good results as there is a new cohort of young people coming along who need education and support to avoid teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

The release of these figures is coming at the tail end of the current debate about 'Benefits Street' and benefits changes. This is an opportunity for politicians to reopen the debate and create a new teenage pregnancy policy.

Government research shows that one teenage parent costs the taxpayer a minimum of £100,000 in the first five years and teenage parenthood mostly results in a life of poverty for both the parents and their children.

Straight Talking employs teenage mothers and young fathers and trains them to deliver a programme in schools which explains from first hand experience, just how hard it is to be a young parent. Peer education is a powerful message in the classroom. Young people learn sex education from their peers and from pornography on the internet. Straight Talking is harnessing the power of those peers to bring the right information to young people and we can do the same for Relationships & Sex Education that now needs to be made statutory in schools.

Pannack says, "This is an area where the State and the third sector both have a role to play to make sure that the work continues to be done and that we can keep those figures falling."

Contact: Hilary Pannack
Straight Talking
hilary.pannack@straighttalking.org
020 8546 4665
www.straighttalking.org