

**EDUCATION OF SCHOOL AGE MOTHERS
REPORT 2004/05**



INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the education provision for pregnant girls and mothers aged 13-18 throughout Northern Ireland during the 2004-2005 academic year. The programme is funded directly by the Department of Education through the Education and Library Boards and with the help of Barnardos. The report also includes comments from those involved in the programme.

The School Age Mothers' (SAMs) programme aims to support young girls to remain in compulsory education and continue with their education if they choose to remain in school beyond this. This is achieved by:

- ❖ Working closely in each of the Education and Library Board (ELB) areas to support girls to remain in school for as long as possible.
- ❖ Working collaboratively with voluntary, community and statutory partners ensuring a wide range of needs of the girls are met.
- ❖ Providing healthcare, childcare and personal development programmes.
- ❖ Offering needs-led flexible support such as individual, project-based, term-time and /or "out of term" programmes.
- ❖ Ensuring a consistent approach operates regionally through local Co-ordinators supported by a Regional Development worker from Barnardos.
- ❖ Monitoring and Managing the service through a Regional Steering Group led by the Department of Education.

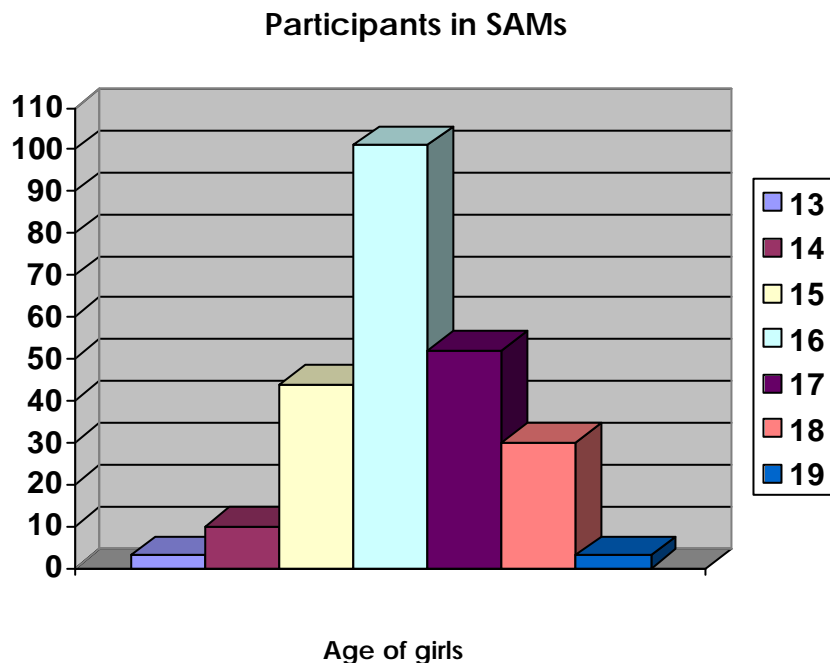
Key Findings:

Although SAM' s primary goal is to ensure that young girls remain in their school of origin, if appropriate, there are occasions when this is no longer feasible and an alternative is offered. During the year 2004/05 **243** girls were referred to the SAM Co-ordinators for support and assistance in continuing their education or seeking support as a follow on from earlier contacts.

The support to the young girls came in a variety of forms ranging from individual, short term input to more focussed long term programmes. They offered a holistic model of support ensuring the health, personal development, social, physical and emotional needs of the girls were met as far as possible as well as their education needs.

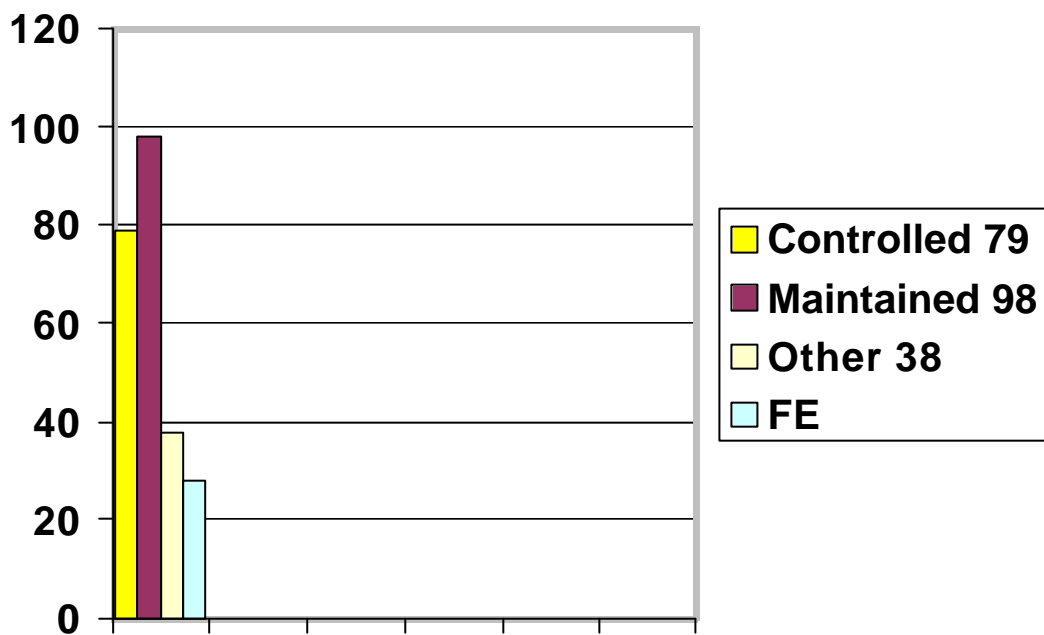
The following tables provide a Regional overview of the age of the girls and types of schools they attended at the time of referral to the service.

Table 1 illustrates the age range of the 243 girls referred to the service.



As illustrated the majority of referrals are for pupils in year 12, 101 of whom were aged 16. There were 85 young women aged 17-19, they opted for a range of support including childcare, project based support and summer programmes.

Table 2: Type of School of origin



The majority of the girls came from mainstream Controlled and Maintained schools with 28 attending FE College.

131 girls remained in school during this year or plan to return to school or FE College following the birth of their baby.

BELFAST EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

66 girls were referred to the dedicated SAM worker this year in the Belfast area;

50 girls from North and West Belfast and 16 from South and East. 4 of these girls were re-referrals from previous year/s (N&W) The majority of referrals came through schools and the education welfare service.

The North and West (N&W) SAM project was facilitated by the Whiterock Family Learning project based in the Belfast Institute for Further and Higher Education (BIFHE). This ran four days a week October 2004 – June 2005 to include a personal development, healthcare and education programme.

Up to 22 girls attended the project throughout the year some on a full-time basis others one session a week as these girls remained in school. 29 girls remained in or plan to return to school once childcare has been established. 10 girls have taken up places in FE College.

The South and East (S & E) project ran February – June 2005. Partnerships were well established in the South East area before the project commenced with S&EH&SST, Ulster Community and Hospital Trust, Barnardos Young Parents' Network. The project was supported and facilitated by Ballynafeigh Community Association, South Belfast. The programme ran three days a week, to include sessions on personal development, healthcare and IT.

6 girls remained in school while up to 8 others attended the project on a full-time or part-time basis. 3 girls received home tuition as the project did not offer educational support and 3 girls have taken places in FE College.

Qualitative Feedback/ Quotes:

Health Visitor- The sessions generated frank discussions amongst the teenagers and gave a starting point to work on. The girls appeared receptive to advice and information given in the Health Promotion sessions.

Midwife- My input helps the girls to develop a greater knowledge and understanding of all aspects of pregnancy, birth and parenthood, therefore reducing anxiety and leading to a healthier pregnancy and post natal period.

Young Mothers- "I became pregnant at 15 and was so frightened about my future. Being part of the Sam project has changed my life as I know I am not alone and will be able to manage. The midwife has given me advice and I am not frightened to give birth."

"I moved here from England and thought I would never fit in anywhere. Everyone on the Sam project was so friendly and supportive. I love my son and know now I can achieve anything I want."

Academic Achievements: 126 Certificates, AQA certificates certified at Entry Level, were awarded to 16 students in English, Maths and ICT.

SOUTHERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

67 girls (including 23 re-referrals from previous year/s) were referred to the three projects based in Craigavon/Banbridge, Newry/Mourne and Armagh/Dungannon areas.

Most of these girls received individual support which included:

- Home visits
- Telephone contacts
- Requests for childcare assessments
- Advice on benefits

The referrals came from a range of sources such as Health Professionals, school and the young girls themselves. In addition to the individual support the girls received, they met at Halloween, Christmas and Easter for peer support and personal development. A summer programme ran for two weeks at the end of June into July.

24 girls from across the Board area attended the programme held in the Chrysalis Women's Centre, Craigavon. Topics concerned were:

- DELTA (Developing everyone's learning and thinking abilities)- memory boxes
- Sexual Health
- Baby Massage
- Healthy Eating

28 girls remained in school with 19 enrolling in FE College.

Academic Achievements:

AVCE – 1st year H & SC & ICT

CACHE Certificate

CLAIT

3 'A' Levels

(4 girls achieved 3 'A' Levels) having completed G.C.S.E's and AS level exams.

1 - 2 G.C.S.E's

3 - 3 G.C.S.E's

2 - 3 A Levels having completed GCSE's and AS level exams

2 - 2 A Levels

2 - 2 A Levels

1 - 7 G.C.S.E's

1 - 4 G.C.S.E.'s

Qualitative feedback

When asked by the facilitator what was the most important thing the girls were taking away with them, their responses were:

"Knowing and having the confidence that I can look after my baby and that people are there to support you."

"Knowing you are not on your own

WESTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

21 girls were referred to one designated project worker in the WELB area. Most referrals came from schools.

The majority of the girls remained in schools with up to 5 girls attending the project facilitated by the Women's Centre, Londonderry. The project commenced October 3rd, every Monday and Altnagelvin Hospital School offered tuition to 3 girls. In January a personal development programme took place on a fourth day.

Support was offered to the girls by the Women's Centre over July and August. 9 girls made use of the crèche and other facilities.

Academic achievements:

11 girls

3 entry level exams:

1 - English, Maths and IT

1 - English and IT

1 - English and Maths

1 - 4 G.C.S.E's

1 – 6 G.C.S.E's
1 – 10 G.C.S.E's
1 – 2 'A' Levels, having completed G.C.S.E's and this year completed AS level exams
1 – Key Stage English and IT
1 – 8 G.C.S.E's

SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

38 girls were referred to the SAM worker in the SEELB area, 11 in the Poleglass Lagan Valley Education Project (LVEP) which facilitates the project and 27 girls came from the North Down and Ards, Belfast fringe and Downpatrick areas. A majority of the referrals came from schools, 13 came from health professionals and 3 girls self-referred.

While the SEELB has supported girls in a range of ways through the Education Welfare Service and in partnership with the LVEP, 2004-05 is the first academic year that the Board has employed a designated worker.

The Co-ordinator received a steady stream of referrals from schools, parents and local health professionals. Each girl received one to one support. 17 of the girls remained in school through their pregnancies and returned to school once childcare had been established.

A new SAM project was established with the Kilcooley Women's Education and Development group housed within Kilcooley Primary School in Bangor. 4 girls attended the project between January and June 2005, 2 of whom made use of the crèche on site. The girls attended personal development and healthcare sessions on a Tuesday and 2 girls enrolled on Maths and English G.C.S.E. programmes two days a week.

Academic Achievements

- 1 – 6 G.C.S.E's
- 1 – 8 G.C.S.E's
- 1 – CLAIT exams
- 1 – NVQ Level 2
- 1- 3 AS levels passed, having completed G.C.S.E's
- 1 – A Level
- 1 – Entry Level Maths
- 1 – 3 A Levels
- 2 – Entry Level Maths and English
- 1 – AS Level exams, having completed her G.C.S.E's

LVEP

10 girls (of which 6 were re-referrals) attended the LVEP SAM Project during 2004-05 academic year. The main project ran from January to June 2005 and for the first half of the project everyone attended four days each week. Three days focused on academic subjects, the remaining day concentrated on personal development. LVEP provided the tutors for part of the programme. During the final ten weeks of the project the girls attended a job taster course delivered in partnership with the Lisburn Institute of Further and Higher Education (World of Work programme). These included bricklaying, motor mechanics, office administration, joinery and beauty therapy.

The 11 girls who attended SAM completed the following exams:

- 1- New CLAIT, OCR Level 3 English and Maths.
- 1 – New CLAIT, essential skills (English and Maths) OCR Level (3 in English and Maths)
- 1 – New CLAIT, OCR Level 3, English and Maths
- 1 – CLAIT, OCR Level 3 English and Maths
- 1 – New CLAIT
- 1 – New CLAIT, OCR Level 3 in English and Maths, NVQ Level 2 in childcare
- 1- New CLAIT, 2 G.C.S.E.'s, essential skills (English and Maths) OCR Level 3 in English and Maths.
- 1 – New CLAIT
- 1 – G.C.S.E.'s – results unknown
- 1 – 6 G.C.S.E.'s, CLAIT
- 1 – New CLAIT, Essential Skills in English and Maths, OCR Level 3 in English and Maths

NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD AREA

41 girls (including 7 re-referrals) were made to the ELB project workers in Coleraine (North) and Ballymena (Central) and Newtownabbey (Southern) areas. Almost all of the referrals came from schools through the education welfare service.

In the Coleraine area, 13 girls received individual support, 10 remained in or will return to school, 1 going to a FE college. 4 young people attended the SAM project including 1 partner. The project ran January to June 2005, one afternoon a week.

An extensive programme was available during these sessions where personal development and healthcare was provided.

Links were reaffirmed this year with the Causeway Health and Social Services Trust in partnership with Surestart. Ballysally Youth and Community Centre facilitated the project for the 6th year.

The young father who attended the project this year, came with his partner who was pregnant. He participated well in all aspects of the programme and he grew in confidence about his ability to be a good father. He spoke at a seminar held in Ballysally in November about the positive impact the project had on his ability to be a good parent to his son and the support he received through the Sam.

Qualitative feedback /Quotes:

Parent of a girl- " It got her in touch with other young mums so she didn't feel so alone...it helped her plan for her future.

Sam Participant- " A lot of things have worked for me this year, the amount I have learned is incredible"

Health Visitor (new to the project this year) commented on what she experienced as an - "enjoyable relevant and non-patronising programme"

Young Father- re-careers session-" This session was well organised and thought through and it really helped me with things I thought I knew about but now I am really sure about them"
"The friendly atmosphere helps reassure young people that not everyone looks down on them.

Academic Achievements

2 – 2 G.C.S.E's

1 – 4 G.C.S.E's

3 – 5 G.C.S.E's

1 – 6 G.C.S.E's

1 – 9 G.C.S.E's

5 Achieved 2 A Levels

Newtownabbey

In the Newtownabbey area (southern) 17 girls were referred to the project worker. Of these, 15 remained in or plan to return to school. A network was re-established to include partnerships with Newtownabbey Guidance Centre, Barnardos and Homefirst Trust. Of the girls referred 14 received individual support and 10 girls attended the SAM project February – June 2005, one afternoon a week. This group was based in Rathcoole, Newtownabbey and due to the high numbers of girls attending the group it was held in Abbots Cross Primary School where SureStart have a large room and crèche facilities. Girls travelled from as far away as Larne to attend the programme.

The partnerships with SureStart contributed to the success of the project this year as they provided lunches, a venue, a crèche and a Health Visitor. Alison facilitated the programme with SureStart staff.

The feedback from the girls was very positive.

Qualitative Feedback

about other participants on the project “Not only did I get on with them, I became good friends and hope to keep in contact with them”

about the programme “I like it when people are coming in and give us advice on things that are relevant to us.”

about the future “To go back to school and achieve qualifications”.

Of those who recorded exam results these are the findings”

“Yes it has made me feel like the world isn’t over for me. Anything is possible and achievable if or if not a Mother.

“ Yes, I felt really depressed and negative about being pregnant, now after joining the project I feel a lot more confident and positive about my future”

Academic Achievements

1 – 5 G.C.S.E’s and 1 OCR exam

1 – 2 G.C.S.E’s

1 – 3 A Levels (having passed G.C.S.E’s and AS Level exams)

Ballymena

There were 10 girls referred in the Ballykeel, Ballymena area. 3 remained in school and 5 are going on to Further Education. 2 girls choose not to

engage with the project worker with 8 receiving individual peer support. 4 girls attended a project, based in Ballykeel Surestart, who provided crèche support, a Programme Co-ordinator and a Health Visitor. The project took place one afternoon a week commencing in February. Other partner agencies who gave support included the Antrim Family Centre, the North Eastern Institute for Further and Higher Education, Homefirst Trust and Barnardos.

The Project ended in April as numbers attending dropped off. Surestart agreed to run a programme in partnership with SAM over the summer months. The programme 'You make a difference.' ran over a 4 week period, and concentrated on the behaviour of mother toward child and included interactive sessions where the girls and their children were filmed. 6 girls attended this programme.

Academic Achievements

1 – 10 G.C.S.E's, 4 AS Levels and 4 A Levels

1 – 10 G.C.S.E's

2 – 6 G.C.S.E's

1 – 7 G.C.S.E's

1 – 8 G.C.S.E's

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW:

The Barnardos Development Worker has worked throughout the year to ensure new supports for young pregnant women and mothers are well established and a consistent level of support is available across the five Education Boards.

Partnerships with the Health Trusts, FE Sector, Home Tuition service and Community groups have strengthened. There are ten multi-Agency Networks across Northern Ireland who oversee the provision and all have worked hard to ensure girls are referred to the service.

Referrals this year have increased by 102 with large numbers in North and West Belfast, Craigavon /Banbridge and parts of the SEELB. This is attributable to a growing awareness of the programme and the need for some girls to maintain a link after leaving school.

With the strengthened partnerships with statutory and voluntary organisations, the Project Co-ordinators have ensured that the girls received a high level of support.

Awareness Seminars:

Seminars have taken place in 4 Board areas in an attempt to inform schools of the support young pregnant women and mothers can receive through the Sam project. As a result of the Sam seminars and the hard work of the project workers in each area working proactively with schools; more girls are remaining in school and returning shortly after the birth of their baby. This indicates that both schools and project workers work well together in maintaining and promoting education for these young women.

ADDITIONAL SAM SUPPORTS:

Childcare:

The provision of appropriate childcare is essential if young mothers are to take full advantage of all the SAM programme has to offer in terms of supporting their return to education or their maintenance in education/further education.

Young mothers are assessed as 'Children in Need' and the expertise in assessing need and determining the availability of the childcare arrangements of these young mothers rests with the Health and Social Services Trust.

Childcare assessments remain an ongoing issue for some project workers where assessments are delayed and girls cannot resume their education until this has taken place.

The 'Care to Learn' NI scheme through the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) provided assistance with childcare and transport for 16-19 year olds who attend courses within this sector. This scheme, which has been running since August 2004 is now well established and many of the girls referred to our service continue their education in a Further Education College.

4 girls on full-time courses received support throughout this scheme in 2004/05.

ADVICE AND SUPPORT WORKER:

Barnardos professional Advice Worker has been offering support to SAM participants since October 2003. During the first 12 months 53% of all her work was with school age mothers increasing to 58% in the second year.

The service provides a telephone helpline, individual consultations with young parents, their families and the professionals who work with them and group consultations on request. The service is provided on an outreach basis whereby the worker meets the young mother at home or at a mutually convenient venue.

The professional Advice Worker has actively engaged with every SAM participant referred by the local Co-ordinators over the past two years. In line with the holistic model of support offered to SAM participants, the provision of a Professional Advice Worker ensures that many additional needs (e.g. in relation to benefit entitlements, housing, childcare, legal rights of fathers etc) can be addressed.

Case Study

A young pregnant woman aged 17 who was estranged from her parents contacted the bureau for information and advice. The advisor carried out a home visit (in temporary accommodation) and accompanied the client to the Social Security Agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. After a few weeks the woman was receiving her entitlements and was offered accommodation. The advisor then helped her to claim a Community Care Grant for the essential items needed to move into her house. This application was turned down and the decision was appealed. A review was requested and the advisor accompanied the young woman to the Social Security Agency to advocate on her behalf. The matter was resolved and the young woman received her Community Care Grant and was able to move into her new home to prepare for the birth of her child.

APPENDIX (Personal Stories)

Personal story 1 – (Names of participants have been changed)

Jenny has always been a fairly bright student, though when she discovered she was pregnant, she realised that she would be due right in the middle of her 'A' level exams. She assumed that she would have to leave school and either abandon her education, or return to Further Education once the baby would be a little older. Jenny was referred to the SAM project by the Hospital Social Worker, and met with the SAM Co-ordinator initially. Jenny was extremely reluctant to break the news to her family or her school, though with the help of the Co-ordinator, she broke the news in good time to access all the support required.

Jenny's school were very understanding of her situation, and fortunately she remained well throughout her pregnancy and was able to attend most classes most days. Once the school were aware of her due date and the date of the exams for which she was entered, they were able to apply for a concession. In effect, this meant that Jenny's coursework carried more weight than it would have otherwise, and she was committed to finishing all her coursework well in advance of her due date. Jenny completed the required quota of exams before her baby was born, and she had reason to celebrate her results having achieved 2 good 'A' Levels.

Jenny is now the proud mother of a beautiful baby boy and with her exams under her belt, she has kept her options open for her next step.

Personal Story 2 –

Sinead was referred to SAM two years ago when she found out she was pregnant at 15. At the initial meeting, she expressed a keen interest in Childcare though at that stage she was too young to get on any of the FE courses. Sinead attended SAM where she continued to study for two GCSEs and returned to school in June to sit the exams, both of which she passed.

After giving birth to a beautiful baby girl, Sinead returned in September for a second year of the SAM Sinead explained:

"I really enjoyed it last year and met so many friends who are still very close to me now."

Sinead completed several exams including essential skills in English and Maths and new CLAIT, though she remained committed to doing childcare whenever possible. In September this year, she enrolled to do NVQ Level 2 in childcare and she has secured her work placement through LVEP crèche. She is delighted with how her life has gone and she is now doing the one thing that she has wanted to do her whole life.

When she got pregnant she thought she was not going to have much of a future and would be claiming benefits her whole life. Now she sees a career and a future for her and her daughter.

Personal Story 3

One young mother whose G.C.S.E results were quite poor due to ill health during pregnancy, attended the SAM project taking a year out and re-focused whilst her health improved. She attended an extremely useful Careers session at the end of the group and returned to school this year to re-sit 2 G.C.S.E's and start an OCR in Business Management only with the support of Childcare. The young mother lived in a remote rural community therefore help from school and the Sam project was vital to her remaining in education.

Presentation given at a SAM Seminar by School VP:

I have been asked to focus on the role the school plays in supporting young women both during their pregnancy and when they return to school to complete their education.

When a girl becomes pregnant and the school is informed, it is important from the outset that she feels she has support, hopefully both from home and in school. I feel it is essential that there is a key person to whom she can turn to for advice who will liaise with outside agencies. The young girl may find it difficult initially to speak to her teachers and the key person can speak on her behalf. It is also important to be aware of the reaction of other pupils-in my experience the girl's friends have been extremely important. In a school setting, we also have to be conscious of and sensitive to younger pupils who are impressionable and therefore we rely very much on the discretion of the young girl.

When informed of a pregnant pupil, the school contacts the EWO who then refers the pupil to the Sam project. Plans need to be made regarding the pupil's continued attendance in class subject to her good health. I feel it is important that, if she so wishes, that the pupil remains at school as long as possible-obviously the length of time will vary according to the age of the pupil. This is particularly important if the pupil is due to sit external examinations at the end of the school year.

When the young girl is no longer able to attend the class, the EWO project officer assumes the key role. The school is able to provide work by liaising with the project officer and/or home tutor. Work may be sent home and returned to the class teacher for marking. The key person keeps in regular contact with the pupils through the project officer.

Following the birth of the baby, the project officer liaises with the school and where appropriate begins to plan with the key person the pupils

reintegration. If necessary the return to school can be phased-again this will depend very much on the age/year group of the young mother.

Arrangements are flexible to follow the pupil to attend personal development courses if deemed appropriate.

In my experience, I have great admiration for two pupils who are present today. They both coped extremely well throughout their pregnancies and also following the births of their babies. They have also excelled in their academic studies.

I feel that the school can provide both emotional support and academic guidance for pupils who find themselves in this position, however we also greatly appreciate and rely on the practical advice and expertise provide by the SAM project to support them in their role as young mothers.

END