

Logan Together Foundation Roadmap – Initial project scope

Project title:

Create more options and incentives for young people to complete education prior to parenting

Strategic or Chapter-based project: Employment, training and engagement (although may sit more neatly with Education)

Short description:

This project will explore the current range and other flexible and alternative education options for young people to complete Year 12 or equivalent, what is working, etc. Programs including trade colleges, alternative schools and school-based programs. The targeting of these programs will contribute to reducing the number of young women becoming teen mothers (alongside other identified strategies).

What results does it help Logan Together to achieve?

Foundation Roadmap scoreboard outcome (life stage)

Parents ready to have kids

Target

Reduce % of teen mothers by 11.6% (from 5.7% in Logan to 5.1% Qld average)

Indicators (how do we know the outcome is being achieved)

Young women complete education without becoming mothers

(Increase in young women completing Year 12 and post-schooling education and training)

Why will it help achieve those results?

A snapshot of the research

Given that adolescent pregnancy and early child bearing are linked to a range of social, cultural, economic and psychological factors (e.g. poverty, school failure, inter-generational family dysfunction, mothers who had children early, exposure to drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, low self-efficacy, poor self-concept and expectations), it is not surprising that there are no simple solutions or quick fixes. Rather, research suggests that a range of interventions addressing different risk and protective factors are required. At a minimum, these include: (1) sexuality and relationship education, (2) contraceptive services and (3) **motivational opportunities**.¹

¹ Slowinshi, K (2001). *Unplanned Teenage Pregnancy and the Support Needs of Young Mothers: Part B: Review of literature*. Adelaide: South Australian Department of Human Services.

There are a plethora of programs that address the first two; it is the third that is often overlooked, neglected or put in the “too hard” basket. However, the risks for young people perceiving that there few, if any, educational and economic opportunities for them are immense.

The link between low expectations for the future, on the one hand, and early childbearing and dropping out of school, on the other, is well established in policy research on education and teenage pregnancy.² A recent (2014) article in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, for example, provides a simple and compelling explanation for why young women may “choose” early parenthood: “It reflects a decision among a set of girls to ‘drop-out’ of the economic mainstream; they choose non-marital motherhood at a young age instead of investing in their on economic progress because they feel they have little chance of advancement.”³

Beyond this, Australian experience confirms this explanation. The majority of young women who become pregnant leave school *before* becoming pregnant. It appears that for these women, pregnancies may not be unintended, but rather a way of feeling successful in contrast to their academic failure⁴.

It appears that there are a number of risk factors (low self-esteem, limited self-efficacy, low self-worth) that predispose young women to feel that their futures are limited. Even those who may have aspirations for good jobs and financial independence often believe that these goals are not achievable⁵. This gap between aspirations and expectations is a cause for concern as it may be one of the key drivers of early childbearing.

For some time, it has been widely accepted that one of the most powerful reasons for early pregnancy is fatalism and hopelessness. As Michael Carrera, an expert on adolescent sexuality and founder of the successful Adolescent Sexuality and Pregnancy Prevention program for The Children's Aid Society in New York, put it: “Education, employment and self-esteem are the most powerful contraceptives of all....Youngsters who feel that they have a future rarely become teen parents.” As Carrera sees it, pregnancy prevention isn't just a technical matter of preventing eggs from meeting sperm; it's also about giving kids hope and determination so that they have a stake in the future and positively want to avoid pregnancy⁶.

² Solomon-Fears, C (2016). *Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Statistics and Programs*. Congressional Research Office.

³ Kearney and Levine (2012). Why is the teen birth rate in the United States so high and why does it matter? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. Spring: 26(2), pp. 141-166.

⁴Kenny, D (1995). Adolescent Pregnancy in Australia in Kenny, D and Job, R (eds) *Australia's Adolescents: A Health Psychology Perspective*. University of New England Press.

⁵ Browne, R (2014). A snapshot of young Australians: high aspirations but low expectations. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <http://www.smh.com.au/national/a-snapshot-of-young-australians-high-aspirations-but-low-expectations-20141129-11w9bf.html>.

⁶ Gleick, E, Reed, S and Schindehette, S (1994). The best contraceptive: how to teach kids to postpone parenthood? Show them a positive future. *People Weekly*. 42:17, p56; Gleick, E, Reed, S and Schindehette, S (1994). The Baby Trap: Special Report. *People*. Vol 42, No 17. <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20104197,00.html>

In a similar vein, a psychologist who worked with adolescents put it this way: "When young women in their teens and in their 20s have something better that they can do with their lives, they'll do it."⁷

It is a simple equation: if young people believe in a positive future, they delay parenthood.

Project details:

This strategy will explore the current range of and other flexible and alternative education options for young people to complete Year 12 or equivalent, what is working, etc. Programs including trade colleges, alternative schools and school-based programs.

Meaningful incentive-based education options will also be explored with young people.

Data and scale:

The table below shows strong correlations between being a teen mother and peri-natal risk factors including smoking during pregnancy and low prenatal visits.

	Perinatal Risk Factors						
	% Smoking During 1 st 20 weeks	% Smoking During 2 nd 20 weeks	% First prenatal visit during 3 rd Trimester	% Low N. Prenatal Visits	% Overweight and Obese	% Teen Mother	% Single Mother Under 25
Perinatal Risk Factors (Mother) (n=159)							
% Teen Mothers (Mothers Aged Less Than 20)	.750**	.766**	.681**	.605**	.627**	1	

There is also a correlation between teen mothers and premature births and AEDC vulnerability for physical health and cognitive and language skills of the child.

The table below indicates the number and percentage of teen mothers in Logan suburbs. Eagleby stands out in terms of both a high percentage and the sheer quantity of adolescent mothers. There are a number of additional suburbs that are not far behind.

Suburbs	N	Teen Mothers as a % of All Mothers
Eagleby	32	12.3
Woodridge	24	7.7
Kingston	22	9.9

⁷ Musick, J (1995). *Young, Poor, and Pregnant*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Beenleigh	18	10.1
Slacks Creek	17	8.9
Loganlea	16	8.9
Browns Plains	16	10.5
Bethania – Waterford	15	8.6
Crestmead	14	6.0
Edens Landing – Holmview	14	10.1
Regents Park – Heritage Park	14	6.1
Marsden	13	4.6
Jimboomba	13	5.2
Subtotal	228	
Waterford West	9	7.8
Greenbank	9	5.3
Hillcrest	8	6.6
Tamborine / Canungra	7	4.7
Logan Central	6	6.5
Boronia Heights – Park Ridge	6	3.9
Loganholme – Tanah Merah	5	2.8
Shailer Park	5	4.3
Logan Village	5	9.1
Mount Warren Park	3	4.1
Rochedale South – Priestdale	3	1.4
Chambers Flat – Logan Reserve	2	4.3
Springwood	2	1.8
Cornubia – Carbrook	2	2.3
Munruben – Park Ridge South	1	2.6
Daisy Hill	1	1.1
Bahrs Scrub / Wolffdene	1	1.4
Underwood	1	1.0

Source: Perinatal Data Collection, Health Statistics Branch, Qld Department of Health. Data are for 2013/14. See also See Vol 3, ch. 3 (Table 3.4) and ch. 8 (Tables 8.5a and 8.5b, Tables 8.7a and 89.7b, and Table 8.8)

Partners:

High schools in Logan City Council

Education Queensland

Alternative schools

Industry schools and TAFE

Local businesses and industry

Youth Services

Co-design:

Local citizens and citizen groups e.g. P&C, existing parents groups at schools

Young people who are young parents

Young people in high schools

Identified High School Principals or delegates

Education Queensland representatives

TAFE representatives

Identified local business owners

Alternative school principals

Citizens/potential mentors

Quick wins: