

# What young parents really want

## Innovative ideas for service providers



# Do you run services for young parents?

## Do you know what they really want?

Young parents in Newham were invited to become Community Links Everyday Innovators, using peer to peer interviews, surveys, brainstorming and creativity techniques to come up with fresh ideas about young parents' services.

Here are just some of the ideas they came up with to help people who run services for young parents.

### Young parents said they wanted ... a social life

- help to make and keep contact with other young parents
- information about child-friendly places to hang out together
- projects that see the value of social life, relaxation and support from friends, and passing information and motivation

### Ideas!!

- when young parents are in contact with midwives or hospitals, ask them to join a pool of other young parents with similar aged children who meet socially for coffee with the kids. They could meet in each others homes, or in cafes or in project spaces
- buddies: more experienced young parents could be trained to organise these social activities and recruit peer mentors to encourage young parents to join these social networks

### Young parents said they wanted ... better information

- clear information about the what, when and where of project activities
- early and last minute reminders of project activities
- information about the facilities available in projects, such as crèche, cooking and so on

### Ideas!!

- a centralised texting service: young parents could give their mobile numbers, and indicate the type of services they are interested in. Projects could type in details of their upcoming projects online, and the software would automatically text details to young parents
- information about young parents groups could be provided with bounty packs

### Young parents said they wanted ... not to be judged

- to beat the social prejudices about them being irresponsible parents
- projects that embrace the good side of being young parents not just hard times
- to be treated respectfully by health professionals, midwives and social workers

### Ideas!!

- let young parents share with each other the prejudices they face, and look for ways to overcome them.
- promote the achievements of young parents who succeed despite the odds, and make sure that education projects about being a young parents are balanced: showing the good and bad
- recognise differences – 14 year olds may have very different needs from 16 year olds – and cater for different personalities and levels of confidence



Although there are many facilities for young parents I would like to see more opportunities given to us.





## Young parents need support and encouragement

### Young parents said they wanted ... rest, relaxation and fitness

- project spaces with comfy spaces to rest tired bodies, even to sleep
- carers to look after the children while they engage in project activities
- activities that they can still take part in if they are late – small children are unpredictable
- opportunities to exercise with and without their children

### Ideas!!

- put sleeping chairs in project spaces for young parents who haven't slept all night
- make sure there are enough hands, volunteers, staff, friends or family around at the project to occupy the little ones so mum or dad can concentrate on learning new skills or relaxing
- make sure sessions are long enough to allow for variable routines
- provide info on fitness, sports sessions individual and group, dance, (street to belly dancing) and music for parents and children (d-jing to nursery rhymes)
- access to advice for parents on their own mental and physical health
- healthy eating demos and cooking workshops

### Young parents said they wanted ... to learn how their children develop

- more than just behaviour management, young parents wanted to learn how to help their children learn and grow
- to feel reassured that they are doing the best for their children
- practical help with behavioural issues like breastfeeding, health, colic, teething, potty training and bedtime
- to know that their children are learning while they are



## Ideas!!

- make sure children have learning activities to do within the project crèche
- run sessions by professional play-workers where young parents can learn together how children develop, and how they can practically work with their developmental stages through hands on play
- facilitate peer support groups around issues such as potty training
- provide information about 24 hour helpline: NHS direct/parent-line for worried parents

## Young parents said they wanted ... clearer advice

- better advice about services, in particular around housing rights, and benefits, finances, and basics such as setting up house (light bulbs to bills)
- advice on specific housing issues such as what are acceptable housing standards, how to challenge these, and who is responsible for maintenance

## Ideas!!

- more advocates working with young people to help them speak up about their housing needs, plain language advice leaflets explaining rights around housing could be provided by midwives
- money management and financial advice, practical sessions on house set up
- one to one support booths for private advice, free telephone services for advice, information desks with lots of access points so you don't have to wait ages with young kids for advice and information

## Young parents said they wanted ... new horizons

- day and weekend trips out to new places to do new activities
- talks and mentoring about interesting career opportunities
- not to be pressured into training or education, but to have space to consider and learn what they really want to do with their lives, to be able to plan ahead and take the right steps to succeed

## Ideas!!

- as well as providing practical advice and tips on parenting, enable young parents to learn new activities, rally racing, bungee jumping, things they might think are closed to them now they are parents, but which other young people do
- organise days out, sometimes with the children, sometimes without
- organise taster sessions in different types of careers, from beauty to banking

## Young Parents' Project Basics

- A crèche that caters for babies and toddlers
- Healthy cooked meals and snacks for parents and children, canteens and self catering areas for warming bottles, shared meals and food demos
- Good baby and toddler – change facilities
- A private space for advice on personal issues
- A choice of activities for mums and dads, for mums or dads only, and for all parents and mixed parents and non-parents groups
- A choice of how to spend incentive vouchers – week by week, or to be able to save them up and contribute to something they wouldn't afford but really need like driving lessons or a family break away.

For more information about this research, contact Everyday Innovators on 020 7473 2270.

To hear more from the young parents, visit <http://donthushdiscuss.blogspot.com>



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