

## Project 2.2- Teenage parents



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## **1. Introduction**

This is the final report on our work with young parents in Devon.

In November 2013 Superact CIC tendered for project 2.2 from the Devon County Council NEETS focussed funding opportunity. This was a specific pot of funding to encourage and support disengaged young parents back into education or apprenticeships/workplace.

Superact CIC is a Community Interest Company set up in 2006 based across the South West of England, with an office in Exeter. We improve lives through long lasting creative change, using creative engagement techniques to develop and deliver participatory arts based interventions that provide positive impact, build self-esteem and promote social inclusion and employability. We specialise in the areas of justice, health and social inclusion.

We have been working with young people who are or about to be NEET since Superact was set up. We work closely with colleges, pupil referral units and social workers to support the re engagement of young people into education or to support them with the soft skills needed to enter employment.

Our interest in working with young parents came initially from our involvement in a European project that addressed how best to support young and single parents back into Education and or return to the work place, and we were impressed by the best practice of One Parent families Scotland.

This report provides valuable information on the outcomes both soft and hard for this group and also looks at how best to support young parents in the future by outlining the challenges faced and lessons learnt not only by Superact but also help the reader to better understand the complicated environment that a young parent can find themselves in.

## 2. Summary and context

Devon County Council initiated a funding stream to specifically target NEETS in Devon. Prior to these targeted projects the number of Devon young people aged 16-18 not in employment, education or training (NEET) was in the region of 5.5%.

Teenage parents continue to be over represented in the NEET group, though the numbers of teenage pregnancies has been lowering historically.

Similarly, the recent Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation places responsibility on young people to engage in some form of learning post 16, for young parents there are many barriers to overcome before participation can take place.

To meet the new legislation young people will need to meet one of the following RPA defined positive outcomes:

- Full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider
- Full-time work or volunteering placement combined with part-time education or training
- An Apprenticeship or Traineeship

Superact worked within four areas of Devon: Exeter, Tavistock, Teignmouth/Dawlish, Tiverton

We partnered with Career South West, Children's Centres, Health Visitors and Schools for our referrals.

**Initial engagement activities found that 19 year old mothers were also very keen for opportunities to re-engage and our participation age was duly raised to 19.**

We engaged with 24 young people – four of whom were not eligible due to being under or over the age for the funding.

Only four fathers attended the sessions – they were difficult to retain and disruptive.

<b>Positive outcomes achieved – project 2.2</b>
9 young mothers returned to either education/training (workplace) – end of February 2015
1 young father entered the work place

## **Additional outcomes – SEPE (Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness)**

Six young mothers achieved a module of an BTEC level 1 through the SEPE (Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness) BTEC.

The SEPE course is delivered over 50 hours with 36 hours of contact time and an outline of the qualification can be found in Appendix A.

The mothers in Teignmouth and Exeter achieved this accreditation over 12 weeks.



## Summary of lessons learnt

*Young parents are re-homed at short notice and usually where there is suitable social housing or safe housing. They are under constant scrutiny by social services and their time is therefore stretched, both of these facts have an impact on their ability to attend regular sessions. It is therefore recommended that a supportive, bespoke provision is on offer to meet their needs for future education and training.*

## Key lessons

<b>Presumption/ challenge</b>	<b>Learning</b>
Referrals	Mixed referral system essential, with advocates of young parents supporting the delivery
Age group	If funding could be found then extending the age up to 21 would be better support for those who have had to leave education early
Child care	Initial delivery is best to include children and gradually introduce time away from the little ones.
Venue	A central location, easily accessible by public transport and a venue that the young people feel comfortable with and are not expected to attend with any other agendas – ie: good parenting classes
Public transport	A challenge for young parents – keep the location in a city centre or in an easily accessible place
Type of activity	Offer taster sessions and let the natural interests of the young people come through – develop team communication
Incentives	It is a good idea to offer lunch or afternoon tea for both parents and children.

### **3. Aims and objectives of funding**

Relevant information taken from Devon County Council tender document:

#### **Lot 2 Programme for young people classed as 'NEET'**

*The number of Devon young people aged 16-18 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is currently in the region of 5.5%. Analysis of data over time shows areas of the county where the number of young people who are NEET is consistently high. Particular vulnerable groups of young people continue to be over represented in the NEET group e.g. teenage parents. Similarly, the recent Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) legislation places responsibility on young people to engage in some form of learning post 16 and for some young people there are barriers to overcome before participation can take place.*

*To meet the new legislation young people will need to meet one of the following RPA defined positive outcomes:*

- *Full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider*
- *Full-time work or volunteering placement combined with part-time education or training*
- *An Apprenticeship or Traineeship*

*The aim of this Lot is to make a real impact to reduce the number of young people within the top five NEETs hotspot areas and work with the teenage parent group to promote engagement and progress them onto further learning, Apprenticeships, Traineeships or jobs with training.*

#### **Project 2.2 Teenage Parents**

*Teenage parents are continuously represented disproportionately in the NEET group. Whilst having very different aspirations and learning needs, teenage parents have much in common as they take on their new role looking after a child. Learners often do particularly well when they are able to come together with other teenage parents for mutual support. Childcare can be a problem and participation is improved where this is available on-site whilst the learning is taking place.*

*The aim of this project is to progress young parents (both males and females) on to further learning, Apprenticeships, Traineeships or jobs with training. A key feature will be the projects ability to work in partnership with other agencies such as children's centres, midwifery services and other relevant referral groups.*

*The Contractor must work closely with CSW and other agencies to promote this project, engage teenage parents, increase participation of Apprenticeships, Traineeships, vocational programmes or jobs with training by young people so as to achieve one of the RPA defined positive outcomes. The Contractor must engage 20 young people across Devon aged 16 – 18; these will be males and females who are either parents or parents to be. Tailored activity will be required to support and progress aspirations of the young person into one of the RPA defined positive outcomes.*

## **1. Project 2.2 – Teenage Parents**

*Where possible, the programme should allow young parents to come together as a group to enable mutual support. To encourage programme attendance the Contractor must ensure the project either provides childcare whilst young parents are participating in the programme or to link in with suitable childcare provision in the locality. Childcare must be provided free of charge to the parents whilst they are involved in this programme; any costs for childcare must be incorporated into the Tenderers submission.*

*10 young parents involved with this project must have met one of the RPA defined positive outcomes below on completion of the programme:*

- Full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider*
- Full-time work or volunteering placement combined with part-time education or training*
- An Apprenticeship or Traineeship*

<b>Positive outcomes to be achieved within Lot 2: Project 2.2</b>
<i>• 6 young people to progress onto an RPA defined positive outcome by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014</i>
<i>• A further 4 young people to progress onto an RPA defined positive outcome by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014</i>

## **4. Planned activity**

### **January 2014 start date**

Superact planned to deliver an innovative and motivational 12 week programme of support to teenage parents in three areas of Devon – Exeter, Tiverton and Bideford. To be based around the SEPE course, the activity was to be supplemented with relevant help and advice from agencies working in the field.

The course to be delivered weekly for four hours – providing a minimum of 36 hours contact time required for SEPE accreditation, along with the additional 14 hours of self-guided learning required from the participants. The courses were to be staggered over the year from January – December 2014 and run twice in Exeter at two different venues and once in Bideford and once in Tiverton. The venues to be at Children’s Centres such as The Chestnut Centre, Flying Start in Exeter, The Two Moors Centre, Tiverton and Bideford Bay.

Our training programme was to be based around the unique BTEC qualification developed by Superact with Edexcel in Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness. The BTEC provides tangible skills to those who feel disempowered and uninspired to stay in education or join the workforce. The qualification is designed to help learners to gain and retain a job or re-engage into education, through the development of the soft skills that employers and that a commitment to education is looking for: adaptability, a can do attitude and objectivity about strengths and weaknesses.

The qualification results in 5 learning credits which can then be supplemented by any other BTEC course to add to the value of the qualification, whether that is delivered in a formal education setting or through on the job training.

We planned to deliver SEPE with arts based activity to include music, graffiti, storytelling and textile recycling sessions. Evidence has shown that a well delivered arts project will develop participants’ reflective learning, their overall personal skills, and their ability to manage relationships, their communication skills, concentration on tasks, enthusiasm, motivation, self-esteem and employability. There are no exams for participants; rather evidence of attainment is gathered by the practitioners running the course and resulting in a learner portfolio which generates the evidence required by Edexcel.

The first round of delivery was planned to start in January at the Exeter venue and completed by w/e 28th March 2014. This was to provide our first six young people to progress onto an RPA defined positive outcome.

The second group in Bideford and in Exeter was to be completed by the end of August and the final group in Tiverton by the beginning of December.

In summary, our plan was as follows:

<b>Course</b>	<b>Recruit</b>	<b>Retain</b>	<b>Progress to RPA</b>
Exeter course 1	10	8	6
Exeter course 2	10	7	3
Bideford course	8	6	3
Tiverton course	8	6	3
Total	36	29	15

We envisaged the following overall time line:

**w/c 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014** – delivery begins in Exeter

**End of January** – marketing for Bideford course to begin

**March 2014** – marketing for second Exeter venue delivery

**w/c 31<sup>st</sup> March** – six participants graduate from the SEPE course into RPA outcomes

**May 2014** – marketing for Tiverton course to begin

**w/c 7<sup>th</sup> April** – Start of Bideford course

**w/c 1<sup>st</sup> September** – six participants graduate from the SEPE courses (3 from Exeter and 3 from Bideford) into RPA outcomes

**w/c 8<sup>th</sup> September** – delivery begins in Tiverton

**w/c 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014** – three participants graduate from the SEPE course into RPA outcomes; final evaluation report

## 5. Activity delivered and challenges faced

Superact works with experienced artists across the region and all are auditioned and offered continual professional development opportunities related to specific client needs.

The Project Manager – Tracy Hill has worked with young parent support organisations through previous European initiatives.

Our lead artist for the young parents programme working alongside the Project Manager was Cleo Heard. Cleo is a graffiti artist and our lead for Probation work, and she handles the Internal Verification and Assessment as required by Pearson (Edexcel).

It was decided to offer a selection of creative activities to the young parents in order to see which interested them sufficiently to keep regular contact.

- Music (drumming)
- Graffiti
- Textiles
- Papercraft
- Story telling
- Drama (improvisation)
- Cooking (healthy eating)

Some of the venues received taster sessions to enable us to ascertain committed interest from the participants.

In line with the initial project plan, information was sent out to referral contacts in the designated "NEET Young parent hot spot" areas of Devon as follows:

### **Exeter, Tiverton and North Devon**

Contacts for referral included – Career South West, Children's Centres, Exeter Community Initiative, Health Visitors, Young Devon, Youth workers, and troubled family support team associated with Senior Schools.

**Exeter** was to be our kick start area for delivery with a known young parent group associated with Career South West, however this group were planning their own young parent activities and although prepared to have us visit they were looking to their own creative activity programme – it was felt best to not confuse young parents with two projects targeting them and to wait on Exeter until a clearer picture of the CSW delivery could be determined. Our lead artist visited the group in early February and met some of the girls. This group was coming to an end due to lack of funding and we invited one of the girls to be a lead contact for us.

We had several meetings with Exeter Community Initiative children's centres, but it was decided that a separate venue where the girls were not attending for parenting reasons would be a better environment for them to focus on themselves and not their parenting skills. On consultation with the girls it was also found that public transport was challenging to attend children's centres on the outskirts of the city and that a city centre venue would be easier for all to attend – ie one bus journey.

Initial interest from **Tiverton** was complicated by the redundancy proposals for the Youth workers and community centre in Tiverton, and it was felt that although there were one or two known young mothers in the Tiverton area, there was insufficient numbers to form an activity group. It was also reported that where Tiverton may have had several young parents two years ago, this was no longer an immediate area of concern for NEET young parents.

In **North Devon** we received initial interest from a Children's Centre in South Moulton that had a young parent support group, but on meeting the support worker we found that all the girls attending were over 19. We had hoped for more referrals from this area of Devon but unfortunately they were not forthcoming.

Given the challenges in North Devon we looked elsewhere in the County and came across the Action 4 Children centres in **Teignmouth** (and Dawlish). The family support contact was very active in helping form and support a group that ultimately met regularly.

### **Taster sessions included**

Graffiti

Drama

Textiles

Paper craft

## 6. Outcomes

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Teignmouth</b>	<b>Tavistock</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
RPA – return to education		2 young mothers	3 young mothers	1 young mother	6
RPA – into workplace training	2 young mothers	1 young father and 1 young mother			4
SEPE BTEC level 1	3 young mothers	3 young mothers			6

### Legacy

#### Exeter

Our lead young parent for Exeter (Lea), has been keen to take up the running of a regular young parent group to meet at the Exeter Community Centre and with the support of Voluntary Arts England and Superact she has been successful in accessing £200 to run an open crafts afternoon at the centre to encourage young mothers to the group.

#### Teignmouth

The Teignmouth & Dawlish children's centre approached Superact for support for a bid to the Action 4 Children activity pot. We were successful, and our young mothers attended a further four sessions at the Dawlish centre and produced some special textile pieces that explored the future world if their child were King or Queen for a day! This centre is really keen to continue its work with young parents for the Teignmouth area.

## 7. Lessons learnt for engagement of young parents

An important consideration when working with young parents is their housing situation. Some of our participants were in mother and baby units, safe housing or social housing. All of our mothers were regularly moved at very short notice. Their lives are unsettled and they are under considerable scrutiny to meet benefit provider expectations as well as to meet child care expectations as parents. An understanding and flexibility is needed to build their trust and commitment to any additional expectations on their time.

### 1. Referrals

Although we had referral partners in place, it was difficult to promote the activity through a third party. The most successful Career SW referrals came from 121 meetings with the CSW supporter, the young parent and the project manager. The challenge of providing a young person with little or no confidence or personal support with a leaflet and an expectation that they will turn up is not realistic. Our relationship with children's centres was also reliant on the time and energy that the staff were prepared to provide and therefore we had a strong relationship with the Teignmouth centre as the support workers were prepared to work with us on engagement and retention. **The most successful marketing tool proved to be word of mouth and therefore the opportunity and positive promotion only started six months into the expected project timeline and was supported by a young mother in Exeter. This delayed engagement made the original aim of RPA outcomes by the end of March 2014 quickly unrealistic.**

### 2. Age Group

The project was targeted and the outcomes expected for 16-18 year old parents. We quickly discovered a strong appetite for support to 19 year old parents. These girls had become pregnant whilst at school and had now settled into being a parent and were keen to return to education or employment training. Many of the girls were either SEN or struggling with family problems and a decision was made to accept 19 year olds onto the project. We feel strongly that for some girls the participation age could even be raised to 21 or as in Scotland 25. There was also confusion with children centres regarding what age constituted a young mother. Many of the children centres we contacted considered young parents up to 25.

### **3. Child Care**

When we first envisaged our delivery programme there was allowance in the budget for child care provision during the workshop sessions. Many of our young parents had never left their children before and felt strongly that they wanted their children with them. This changed our focus, provision, venue considerations and our staffing for the sessions. This continued to be the case with the Exeter group, however the Teignmouth group gradually accepted the children to be cared for in another room separate from themselves, and this became a positive soft outcome for some of the mothers that will allow them to build confidence and trust to progress with their own education.

### **4. Venue**

Initial plans to work with the children centre network quickly became complicated regarding room suitability, local catchment areas to enable free use of the rooms and lack of confidence for the young mothers to be themselves in an environment where they perhaps felt judged for their parenting skills. It was therefore deemed that a totally independent venue would work best in Exeter. However in Teignmouth, the support worker was committed to developing a young parent group and to make the environment as flexible and friendly for the group. In Tavistock, the group we worked with was an existing young parent group at a children's centre, and we unfortunately found this environment very challenging. Firstly, because we were dropping in on their regular meetings with a different agenda; and, secondly, because their main reason for attending these sessions was to enhance their parenting skills. Tavistock was the most difficult group to work with, however we did have some positive outcomes here and the group were keen to have a different activity each session.

### **5. Public transport**

Public transport is fast becoming a very big problem for young parents. They are totally reliant on buses, being the cheapest and most available transport, however the bus layout now accommodates both disability and child transport in the same areas. If a mother has a pram to handle she is asked to use the disability area, but will always be asked to get off the bus should a disabled passenger need that space. There is strong frustration among parents who are reliant on this form of transport and it can affect their ability to attend on time, meaning they often arrive very early or late for meetings.

We had to consider our venues for delivery as to whether a bus service was close and also how many bus journeys would be needed to reach the venue. It was for this reason that in Exeter our parents requested a city centre location. In Teignmouth our venue was next to a bus stop and in Tavistock all of our participants walked to the centre.

## **6. Type of artistic engagement**

We tested several different types of creative engagement with the young mothers. Graffiti was popular as a group activity and fun for all to get involved, but music (drumming) was our least popular session.

The girls particularly were always keen to link activity to their children – ie to make something related to the children, or for their children's benefit. It was because of this mind-set that a variety of textile workshops was introduced and proved to be incredibly popular. The girls loved making name plaques for their children and felt a real sense of achievement and pride when they finished. Each week a different textile skill was introduced and a letter would be completed using that method.

On reflection textiles has been a female group activity for many hundreds of years – making, talking, listening and supporting. It proved to be very powerful for our young mothers and their confidence and thought process grew as a result.

## **7. Incentives**

Initial plans to include incentives such as vouchers for online shopping became too difficult to manage and the young parents were not looking for any major incentives to become involved. They were however pleased to receive travel expenses on a needs basis (not every week) and always very keen for a hot lunch for themselves or afternoon tea for everyone (cake for little ones!)

## Appendix A

### Creative Engagement – SEPE – Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness programme.



Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness (SEPE) is a BTEC qualification being offered by Pearson (was Edexcel) and Superact.

#### **A qualification designed to meet the individuals' needs**

The SEPE award is designed to help those who may find accessing traditional routes to employability challenging, to build confidence and gain a meaningful qualification. It is also hoped that in taking this qualification students will develop a passion for learning through the unique holistic delivery of this course.

*'These qualifications are designed to help learners to gain and retain a job, and then to advance in the workplace, through development of the soft skills that employers are looking for: adaptability, a 'can do' attitude and objectivity about strengths and weaknesses.* Accessed from: Page 2, Level 1 and Level 2 SEPE Specification 280410 Draft

#### **Employability Skills**

The purpose of this qualification is to equip learners with *employability skills* and the self-confidence to use them. Essentially, employability skills are the skills needed to obtain jobs and skills that help you to stay in a job and develop a career. Whilst there will always be some job-specific skills that an employer is looking for; most employers will also want to see a set of generic skills associated with teamwork, communication, and self-motivation in potential employees. In fact there is clear evidence that employers are often less demanding of job specific skills in which they can assist a potential employee with the appropriate training; however, they do want employees to exhibit generic employability skills:

*'Amongst core characteristics employers look for are motivation and flexibility. These include willingness to work and learn, and appearance, behavior, confidence, and positive gestures and mannerisms.'* Bunt K, McAndre F, Kuechel A (2005), *Jobcentre Plus Employer*

## **The Superact Approach**

During the development of the award it became clear that an arts based approach to SEPE could be highly successful. Superact! is a community interest company that focuses on holistic learning through the arts, specifically music. Many successful projects in the criminal justice service during which both old and young offenders have developed many of the employability skills previously mentioned, have demonstrated to the company the clear role that the arts can have in developing self-confidence and essential 'soft skills' for employability.

Many people, young and old, already enjoy the arts whether it is Music, Art, Dance, Drama, or Writing. Others have never had the chance to explore their creativity through the Arts. Evidence has shown that a well-delivered arts project will develop participants' reflective learning, their overall personal skills, their ability to manage relationships, their communication skills, their concentration on tasks, their enthusiasm, motivation and self-esteem. Many studies have made similar observations when comparing the impact of the arts on self-esteem and employability.

[www.superact.org.uk](http://www.superact.org.uk)



## **Appendix B**

### **Case study information**

Ebonie is a young parent who is in a relationship with her child's father. She has spent time in care due to her mother being an alcoholic and her father being in prison for much of her life. She moved to Teignmouth when her son, 10 months old, was born and didn't know anyone in the area.

Ebonie has enjoyed taking part in this activity; she wouldn't have considered undertaking such a project by herself, not having the resources or skills necessary.

Ebonie has grown in confidence and has discovered that she can trust people. She has been let down so many times by the people she should have been able to count on that this been a major step for her. She recognises that she has been able to trust the staff who work in the crèche to care for her son, whereas the only people she had left him with before were her partner, his mother and her grandmother.

The increase in confidence has resulted in Ebonie thinking about her future in general, and getting back to work in particular. Ebonie has just received a letter from South Devon College offering her a place on a course and this is as a direct result of working with Superact. The Superact Project Manager arranged the interview for Ebonie and accompanied her to it, supporting Ebonie to enquire about bursaries for fees, childcare, etc.

The course has had a positive impact on Ebonie's son, Rory, who has enjoyed being in the crèche and getting lots of attention from the crèche staff and having the opportunity of being with other children during the sessions. Ebonie is pleased that Rory has had this opportunity as her Grandmother said "it will be good for Rory". Ebonie clearly enjoys being able to talk about Rory's development with the Children's Centre Staff who first met him when he was 4 months old and have seen him grow and develop – getting to grips with weaning, teething and now crawling. Ebonie likes the fact that we notice the changes because we only see him once a week.

Ebonie getting back into education will indirectly benefit Rory; he will get to spend a day with his Dad and a day with his Grandmother; Ebonie will continue to grow in confidence and be a strong role model for Rory and finding employment will have a positive impact on the family's finances.

Taking part in the initiative has increased social inclusion for both Ebonie and Rory. Ebonie has started to attend universal Children's Centre groups that are aimed at all parents, not just Young Parents and she feels confident to invite some of the parents she has met to her home.

The key thing for Ebonie that has come out of participation in this activity is the chance to reflect on her childhood experiences and think about the kind of parent she wants to be for Rory. Ebonie does not appear to be bitter about her childhood, instead she focuses on the plans she and her partner have for Rory and their future. She has talked about wanting Rory to have more than she had as a child, and wanting to create special memories for them all.

***Ebonie is signed up to attend South Devon College this September to continue hairdressing at level 2 and then 3 with the intention of providing hair dressing to care home residents.***

### **Additional material**

Private U tube links to a small clip about the young parents in Exeter - <https://youtu.be/VEJ0xHg7hYA>