

**Date:** Wednesday 23 October 2002

**Title:** Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly for Wales

**Venue:** Incidence of Teenage Conceptions across Wales

### **Purpose**

1. A paper for the Committee to note on the incidence of teenage conceptions across Wales.

### **Background**

2. On 17 April 2002, newly published teenage conception figures for 2000 were presented in the Minister's Monthly Report to the Committee. Members requested a breakdown of figures by local authority area. Provisional estimated numbers and rates of conceptions for women usually resident in unitary authority areas in Wales in 2000 have been published by the Office of National Statistics.

### **Under 18 conception rates**

3. Under 18 conception rates for the whole of Wales in 2000 (see Table 1 in Annex 1) show that the conception rate for females aged under 18 has fallen by almost 7 per cent since 1999. The reduction since 1998 is almost 14 per cent, equivalent to some 400 fewer conceptions in girls under 18. It is important to note that in previous years conception rates have fluctuated, for instance between a low of 46.5 per 1000 females aged 15-17 years in 1994 and a high of 54.8 in 1998. Before we can be confident of a sustained downward trend, data for further years are required.
4. Table 2 in Annex 1 presents under-18 conception rates by unitary authority area. When broken down into local areas the number of conceptions in each area is relatively small. Rates are therefore calculated on a rolling average for three yearly intervals. These rates are less sensitive to yearly fluctuations. Key observations from Table 2 are:
  - Negligible variation in the national under-18 conception rate between 1995-97 and 1998-2000 (51.3 per 1000 females aged 15-17 and 51.0, respectively).

- The highest under-18 conception rates for 1998-2000 were in Blaenau Gwent , Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, and Rhondda Cynon Taff (69.2, 64.7, 64.3, and 63.4 per 1000 females aged 15-17, respectively.)
- The lowest under-18 conception rates for 1998-2000 were in Monmouthshire, Powys, and Ceredigion (28.6, 32.4, and 33.6 per 1000 females aged 15-17, respectively).
- The largest decreases in the rates presented were for: Conwy (50.0 in 1998-2000 compared to 55.1 in 1995-97); Merthyr Tydfil (64.3 in 1998-2000 compared to 68.7 in 1995-97); and Vale of Glamorgan (41.1 in 1998-2000 compared to 45.3 in 1995-97).
- The largest increases in the rates presented were for: Flintshire (46.2 in 1998-2000 compared to 40.4 in 1995-97); and Ceredigion (33.6 in 1998-2000 compared to 29.5 in 1995-97).

5. It should be noted that the rates are based on estimated population figures by age published prior to the first results of the 2001 census becoming available on 30 September 2002. The Office for National Statistics will, in due course and by March 2003, publish revised population figures by age and local authority area which will affect the precise levels of the rates presented in this paper and which may alter the relative positions of some authorities including, possibly, those with the very highest or lowest rates. The broad picture should, however, not be fundamentally altered by the eventual, revised figures

### **Tackling teenage conceptions**

6. One of the objectives of the *Strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales* is to reduce the rate of teenage conceptions. A number of factors have been identified as contributing to high teenage conception rates. These include: low expectations related to disadvantage; ignorance of contraception; and mixed messages about sex from the media, parents and public institutions. The Strategy recognises the need for a 'joined-up' approach to tackle teenage conceptions. Work to implement the Strategy began in Autumn 2000. Assessment of the impact of the Strategy on teenage conception rates cannot be made until conception rates for 2001 and beyond are made available.

7. Outlined below are a number of initiatives across the Welsh Assembly Government which address teenage pregnancy prevention:

- A number of health based initiatives are being taken forward to tackle teenage pregnancies include: a grant scheme to encourage innovative sexual health service provision to young people most vulnerable to teenage pregnancy; local sexual health strategy action plans and service specifications; and best practice guidance on the provision of sexual health advice services for young people.
- Looked after children are one of the groups most vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. Through the Children First programme, the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned the Family Planning

Association (fpa cymru) to provide training courses on sexual health and behaviour issues relating to the care of looked after children for local authority, health service and voluntary sector staff. As a result of issues identified through this training fpa cymru has now been commissioned to produce a series of briefing sheets for staff and carers of looked after children.

- The Children and Youth Partnership Fund and Sure Start run a number of projects dealing with sexual health and teenage pregnancies. Partnerships consisting of local authorities, health authorities and voluntary organisations administer the schemes and use local knowledge to determine which projects are best placed to help children and young people in their area. Ongoing projects include schemes that aim to improve young people's understanding of sexual health service provision and its availability in their localities.
- Deprivation is a key risk factor associated with early teenage pregnancy. The 'Communities First' programme applies to many of Wales' most deprived communities. The Communities First Guidance outlines the priorities that local Partnerships should consider when producing their Community Action Plans. One of the priorities is to help prevent teenage pregnancies, by ensuring that contraceptives and sexual health advice and services are available to young people.
- Sex and relationships education in schools has been an issue consistently raised in the Welsh Assembly's Government's recent consultations with young people. In July 2002, new sex and relationships education guidance was issued, and a conference on innovative ways of implementing sex and relationships education programmes is planned for early next year.
- 'Extending Entitlement' outlines a universal entitlement for all 11-25 year olds living within Wales. 22 Young People's Partnerships will implement the entitlement by establishing 3 local priorities. Sexual health has been identified as a specific priority by a number of the partnerships.

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Table 1. Conceptions to females aged 15-17 years in Wales

	Total conceptions	Conception rate per 1000 females aged 15-17	Percentage of conceptions leading to maternity	Percentage of conceptions terminated by abortion
1992	2,387	48.0	66.4	33.6
1993	2,307	47.5	66.9	33.1
1994	2,297	46.5	66.6	33.4
1995	2,509	48.0	68.4	31.6
1996	2,932	53.5	66.4	33.6
1997	2,895	52.2	65.5	34.5
1998	3,030	54.8	64.2	35.8
1999	2,781	50.8	63.9	36.1
2000	2,649	47.3	65.3	34.7

Table 2. Conceptions to females aged 15-17 years by unitary authority

	1995-1997 number of conceptions	1995-1997 rate per 1,000 women aged 15-17	1995-1997 percentage leading to abortion	1998-2000 number of conceptions	1998-2000 rate per 1,000 women aged 15-17	1998-2000 percentage leading to abortion
<b>Wales</b>	<b>8,336</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8,460</b>	<b>51.0</b>	<b>36</b>

Isle of Angelsey	150	37.5	36	150	39.6	43
Gwynedd	271	42.6	39	262	41.9	36
Conwy	314	55.1	40	288	50.0	44
Denbigshire	222	46.0	36	233	47.8	39
Flintshire	327	40.4	48	379	46.2	40
Wrexham	392	53.5	38	414	54.4	42
Powys	210	32.0	45	224	32.4	40
Ceredigion	108	29.5	51	123	33.6	44
Pembrokeshire	271	40.1	31	282	41.4	29
Carmarthenshire	430	44.7	37	412	43.7	36
Swansea	723	56.9	39	731	58.0	36
Neath Port Talbot	397	51.3	29	428	53.5	36
Bridgend	431	61.9	30	425	59.0	32
Vale of Glamorgan	319	45.3	36	293	41.1	40
Cardiff	852	51.7	28	871	49.1	32
Rhondda Cynon Taff	871	64.5	31	889	63.4	35
Merthyr Tydfil	231	68.7	24	231	64.3	26
Caerphilly	679	67.8	28	666	64.7	33
Blaenau Gwent	277	68.9	25	281	69.2	28

Torfaen	299	56.0	27	305	59.0	31
Monmouthshire	137	28.2	42	135	28.6	52
Newport	425	55.7	26	438	54.0	32