

Planned pregnancy, planned parenting: evidence for policy and practice.

Conder, J., Mirfin-Veitch, B., Munford, R. & Sanders, J.

November, 2008



Research Objectives

- To describe the experiences and perspectives of parents with intellectual disabilities themselves;
- To describe the perspectives of these parents on their interactions with support workers and professionals on the barriers to effective support;
- To describe the perspectives of support workers and other professionals on the barriers to effective support;
- To analyse the contribution of different perspectives to an effective support relationship;
- To identify the specific difficulties experienced by support services in supporting parents who have an intellectual disability, and the barriers to adapting services to take account of the parents' intellectual disabilities;
- To identify the indirect effects of legal, policy and resource factors on effective support in New Zealand.

November, 2008



Christine

Christine learnt most about periods, sex and pregnancy from being in a large foster family.

Christine was in her twenties when she became pregnant. Her partner was living in a different town but they talked about what to do on the telephone.

November, 2008



Christine was using contraceptives most of her life. She had been on depo provera for about five years. She stopped the depo provera six months before becoming pregnant.

Christine didn't plan to become pregnant. When we asked her how she felt at the time she said:

"I was happy as. I went back and told all my classmates and my tutors at the time."

November, 2008



Christine hadn't talked to anyone about wanting to be a parent.

Other people seemed to recognise that Christine might need extra help but Christine doesn't remember them talking about this with her.

Christine went to an antenatal class that is designed for teenage women.

November, 2008



After Christine's baby was born they both went to a place for her to learn to look after the baby.

This meant going to another city, even further away from her partner.

The place that they stayed is a house set up as a safe home for young women while they are pregnant and after they have their baby.

November, 2008



Christine thought that she did *“everything”* for her baby but that is not what others said.

After three months she was told that her baby would be going into foster care.

They returned to their own town.

Christine was able to decide who she wanted to foster her daughter.

November, 2008



Christine is happy with the foster parents that her daughter lives with.

Her choice of foster parents has meant that she has not always been able to live near her daughter.

When they are living in the same town Christine is able to do things with her daughter at the foster home.

However when not in the same town Christine finds it hard to visit.

November, 2008



Molly and Peter

Molly and Peter decided to have a child seven years after they were married.

They talked about it with other people.

Peter's parents did not want them to have a child. Some other people were less worried.

Molly and Peter decided to go ahead with their plan to have a child.

November, 2008



Molly went to the doctor early in her pregnancy to have it confirmed.

She had a midwife.

Molly and Peter went to antenatal classes.

Other people started planning the support that Molly and Peter would get when the baby was born.

November, 2008



Molly went into labour a month before the baby was due.

She had to go to another town to have her baby.

Peter was able to go. He was there for the birth.

When the baby was born he needed to go into the Special Care Baby Unit.

November, 2008



Before Molly and Peter could get the baby home they had to have support arranged.

This meant that they had to travel each day to visit their son. They were given petrol vouchers to help with the cost.

When the baby went home Molly and Peter had 24 hour support.


This continued until the baby was nearly one.

November, 2008



It was decided that Molly and Peter should be looking after their baby with less help. They found this hard. One of them hit the baby and then told the support worker. Service policy meant that this was reported to the child protection agency. Their child went into foster care. He gets to see his Mum and Dad once a week.


November, 2008



What do these stories illustrate?

- ◆ Pre-pregnancy planning
- ◆ Support and planning during pregnancy
- ◆ Early parenting support


November, 2008



Pre-pregnancy planning

- ◆ Knowledge of contraceptives.
- ◆ Parenting education.
- ◆ Responses to planning a family.


November, 2008



Support and planning during pregnancy

- Need for support identified early
- Support available
 - 'fit' for purpose
 - Small town
- Assessment of needs for parenting


November, 2008



Early parenting

- ◆ Assessment
 - In home
 - Away from home
- ◆ Putting the plan into action
 - When should it be reviewed?


November, 2008



Conclusion

- ◆ Policy and practice implications
 - Young people with intellectual disability should be able to make an informed decision about parenting (education, contraception available)
 - Family and social support assist parents with intellectual disability to succeed (advocacy role as well as support)
 - Support options need to be flexible and informed, with resources readily available to assist the local providers of services
 - Assessment of parenting should occur within the home and the parent be clearly informed of the process.
 - Parenting support needs to be planned with regular review by all parties.

November, 2008



References

Areschoug, J. (2005). Parenthood and Intellectual Disability: Discourses on birth control and parents with intellectual disability 1967 - 2003. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 7, 3-4, 155 - 175.

Booth, T. & Booth, W. (2005). Parents with learning difficulties in the child protection system. Experiences and perspectives. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 9, 2, 109 - 129.

Cuskelly, M. & Bryde, R. (2004). Attitudes towards the sexuality of adults with an intellectual disability: parents, support staff, and a community sample. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 29, 3, 255 - 264.

Feldman, M. & Class, L. (1999). Teaching child-care and safety skills to parents with intellectual disabilities through self-learning. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 24, 1, 27 - 44.

ASSID Special Interest Research Group on Parents and Parenting with Intellectual Disabilities (2008). Parents Labelled with Intellectual Disability: Position of the ASSID SIRG on parents and parenting with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 21, 296 - 307.

Llewellyn, G. & Bridgen, D. (1995). Factors affecting service provision to parents with intellectual disability: An exploratory study. *Australian and NZ Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 20, 2, 97 - 112.

McConnell, D., Llewellyn, G. & Bye, (1997). Providing services for parents with intellectual disability: Parents needs and service constraints. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 22, 1, 5 - 17.

McGaw, S. (2000). *What works for Parents with Learning Disabilities? - Summary*. Report available from: <http://www.beasleys.org.uk/resources>

Mirfin-Veitch, B., Bray, A., Williams, S., Clarkson, J. & Belton, A. (1999). Supporting parents with intellectual disabilities. *NZ Journal of Disability Studies*, 6, 60-74.

Strike, R. & McConnell, D. (2002). Look at Me, Listen to Me, I have something important to say. *Sexuality and Disability*, 20, 1, 53 - 63.

November, 2008



For further information about this research contact

Jenny Conder:

jconder@donaldbeasley.org.nz

Or

Brigit Mirfin-Veitch:

bmirfin-veitch@donaldbeasley.org.nz

November, 2008

