

Newcastle teens praise parenting skills programme

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A new programme designed to prepare teenage mums and dads to-be for parenthood is receiving high praise, having helped over 30 young people since it started in September 2007.

Aimed at teens in Newcastle, 'Being a Parent' is delivered by children's charity Barnardo's, in partnership with the Northern Learning Trust and input from Connexions, Family Learning and Newcastle College.

Funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) North East, the ten week course focuses on practical parenting skills such as weaning, feeding and how best to care for and bath a baby. A further six sessions offer post-natal advice and support.

Young people also receive assistance with wider issues such as housing, training and sexual health, with help from a range of external providers.

Sue Curry, team leader and teenage pregnancy advisor with Barnardo's, said: "We have had great feedback from the young people involved and are continually looking to adapt and develop the programme to best suit their needs. It's encouraging when we see new mums and dads face parenthood in such a confident and responsible way and we enjoy helping them to achieve this."

New dad Lee Marshall, 18 and from Kenton Bar, rates the programme highly following the birth of his baby in February. He said: "My girlfriend and I were understandably shocked when we discovered that we were soon to be parents, especially at such a young age.

"Not only has the programme prepared me for the sleepless nights, nappies and feeds, but it's given me the confidence I needed to be a responsible dad and look after my daughter to the best of my ability."

Through the programme, Lee has also been able to improve his numeracy and literacy skills thanks to a Skills for Life tutor from Northern Learning Trust, which he hopes will open the door to new job opportunities.

The 'Being a Parent' programme has supported 34 young people to date and, having secured funding for a further year, will continue to equip many more with essential parenting skills, building brighter futures for themselves and their children.

Chris Roberts, Regional Director, LSC North East said: "This programme is clearly having a positive impact on the lives of so many new mums and dads in Newcastle and the Barnardos teenage pregnancy team and Northern Learning Trust are to be commended for their commitment. Arming young people with the skills they need for parenthood is important as it not only helps them learn essential practical skills, but also builds self confidence. I wish all involved every success in this next phase."

For more information, please contact Sue Curry on (0191) 230 0196 or email sue.curry@barnardos.org.uk.

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Editor's note:

Picture caption: Barnardo's team leader and teenage pregnancy advisor, Sue Curry, with young dad Lee Marshall

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