



Title: Preparing for parenthood

Level: SENIOR

Links to Curriculum for Excellence

In terms of Curriculum for Excellence this level is concerned with extending or deepening what is described at Fourth Level.

| Experiences and outcomes | Benchmarks |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| I can explain the importance and the enduring and complex responsibility of being a parent/carer, and the impact on life choices and options. HWB 4-51a Through investigation I can explain the support available for parents and carers looking after babies and bringing up children. HWB 4-51b | Explains how to access support for parents and carers. |

Learning intentions

- Young people reflect on the need to plan for parenthood.
- Young people understand what choices and actions can be taken before conception to ensure the best start in life for a child and parent/carer.
- Young people understand the term pre-conception health.

Success criteria

- I can reflect on the need to plan for parenthood.
- I can talk about the value of pre-conception health.
- I can discuss the choices and actions a potential parent can take to ensure the best start in life for the child.

Resources to support this activity

- PowerPoint slides
- Prop for activity: Traffic lights/Getting ready for a healthy pregnancy (blank version)
- Handout: Traffic lights/Getting ready for a healthy pregnancy
- Health Before Pregnancy (NHS Lanarkshire/Young Scot) (duration 1 minute 18)
<https://youtu.be/9MIACFvEuy8>

Whenever you use content on a platform like YouTube please cue the film you intend to play in advance, check it is the film you want to view, and skip adverts.

Activity

1. Introduce the topic along these lines: Often when we talk and learn about parenthood we start with learning about pregnancy, then we think about how to care for and nurture the baby and growing child, because we want the best for our children – but in this session the class/group will be thinking about what comes before pregnancy, it's about **planning for a baby**.
2. **Discussion: Do I ever want to become pregnant?** Ask young people to discuss the questions, starting with the first, then moving on to subsequent slides. Start in small groups, with some feedback.

Do I ever want to become pregnant, or for my partner to become pregnant?

If no, what could I do to avoid becoming pregnant or making someone pregnant?

If yes, when in my life do I think I might want to become pregnant or have my partner become pregnant?

What kinds of things would I like to be sorted/in place before I become a parent?

3. **It's said that anyone who wants to have a baby usually wants these 3 things.** Share the next slide for some discussion, the issues/themes that arise will be picked up in subsequent conversation.

It's said that anyone who wants to have a baby usually wants these 3 things

- A safe pregnancy
- A thriving baby
- A rewarding parenthood

Thinking about you – would you agree? How do you think each can be achieved?

4. **Babies born in Scotland every year.** Use the slide to pose the questions (perhaps with some clarification of the terms unplanned/unintended):

Babies born in Scotland every year.

How many babies are born every year?

What's the average age of mums and dads when their first baby is born?

What percentage of conceptions/when women become pregnant do you think are unplanned or unintended?

Get some responses then share the slide with the statistics.

Approximately 52,000 babies are born in Scotland every year.

The average age of a first time mum is 30 years old and for dads it's 32.

It is estimated that between one-third and one-half of conceptions/women becoming pregnant are unintended or unplanned.

Once shared, ask: What might be the circumstances in which a pregnancy might be *planned*? What circumstances might there be in which a pregnancy is *not planned*?

5. Explain that more research and knowledge about health and wellbeing tells us that we can do a lot to make sure babies are healthy and parents can do the best job of being a parent if we actually *plan to be* a parent, rather than just let it happen. Explain that to do this before getting pregnant is called *pre-conception health*. Share/read the slide and check understanding:

Pre-conception health is about the choices a woman and her partner make and the actions they take before being pregnant. We can usually expect that a healthy, thriving woman will give birth to healthy, thriving baby. Pre-conception health is about doing our best to make sure that women and their partners plan for a healthy positive pregnancy.

6. **What can be happening in a woman's life that could have a negative impact if she was to become pregnant?** Pose the question on the slide and ask young people to work in small groups to think of things which can get in the way of a healthy pregnancy, acknowledge in the introduction that each will have an impact on both physical and mental health and wellbeing. This could be a planned or unintended pregnancy, run through the categories before starting discussion:

What can be happening in a woman's life that could negatively impact if she was to become pregnant? You can think about:

- Environmental factors
- Health
- Social situation
- Lifestyle

7. After some consideration, ask for feedback. After exploring commonalities and diversity of opinion, ask the young people to work again with their group to pick one of the things that can get in the way of a healthy pregnancy and think about: **What could the woman and her partner do to end or minimise this negative factor?** Through feedback explore ideas as a class/group. Discussing just a small number of factors will highlight the broad range of things that can be considered before and during a pregnancy.
8. **Getting ready for a healthy pregnancy.** Give the young people the 'blank' traffic lights prop with the Stop/Check/Start buttons only. If you can't print in colour have young people draw their own or use colour card. Explain that small groups are to imagine they are advising any woman (and partner) who are planning to get pregnant about the things they should stop, check and start before conception. They can consider some issues or themes already highlighted in class conversation. They should list as many ideas/bits of advice they can. After some time, review what the young people have suggested, explore why they think these things are important, and how they might help make a pregnancy and early years of a child healthier.
(NOTE: A fully populated version of the traffic lights diagram is provided, share this if you think it works with young people as you reflect on their own suggestions. One issue is point 4 in the STOP section which refers to stressful/violent relationships, this would require sensitivity and recognition of the complexities of situations and the powerlessness a person can feel/experience).
9. **Film:** Share the short animation, this affirms some key messages about pre-conception health: Health Before Pregnancy (duration 1 minute 18) <https://youtu.be/9MIAcFvEuy8>
10. **Alcohol:** This will likely have come up in discussion, it is mentioned in the animation but use the final slide to emphasise the important message about alcohol (and drug) free pregnancy. Emphasise the 3 possible contexts here: alcohol *while pregnant* or *trying for a baby* or *at risk of an unintended pregnancy*. The term *Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders* may have been mentioned or can be used to describe the impact of alcohol use the foetus during pregnancy. For young people interested in this topic, further links are provided below.
11. End with acknowledgement of all the contributions today. Make links to the further learning that young people will do on contraception.

Additional ideas

This activity is informed by those working on developing Scotland's approach to pre-conception health. For staff, parents or young people interested in exploring the issues further the report by Dr Jonathan Sher called **Missed Periods: Scotland's opportunities for better pregnancies, healthier parents and thriving babies the first time and every time** (commissioned by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde) is available here: <http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/237840/missed-periods-j-sher-may-2016.pdf> a shorter/overview of the main findings is available in the report Prepared for Pregnancy?

<http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/237841/prepared-for-pregnancy-j-sher-may-2016.pdf>

Many campaigns have been delivered promoting an alcohol-free pregnancy. If young people are interested more here: <https://alcoholcampaign.org/category/fasd/>

More about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Young people or colleagues may be interested in finding out more about FASD. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) describes a wide range of life-long birth defects that are caused by the mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy. If the mother drinks while pregnant the baby could be affected by:

- Physical and growth problems
- 'Neurodevelopmental' problems, such as co-ordination difficulties, ADHD and Autism
- Emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties

It is thought that *at least* 2% of Scotland's population are affected by FASD. This may be an underestimate, owing to lack reliable information about drinking during pregnancy and difficulties making a reliable FASD diagnosis. With around 60,000 babies born in Scotland every year this means that 1,200 babies are born with FASD annually. But FASD is potentially 100% preventable by not drinking any alcohol if pregnant or trying for a baby. Therefore the straightforward message is: '**no alcohol no risk!**'

Links for further information on FASD:

FASD Hub Scotland, funded by the Scottish Government, can offer a variety of support services for adoptive parents living with children and young people affected by

FASD: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/fasd-hub-scotland>

A **Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) Guideline** on the diagnosis on FASD in children was launched on 23 January 2019: <https://www.sign.ac.uk/sign-156-children-and-young-people-exposed-prenatally-to-alcohol.html>

The Alcohol Framework 2018 was published on 20 November 2018. Action 18 states: We will continue to prevent and reduce the harm caused by alcohol consumption in pregnancy through increased awareness of the risks, increased awareness of, and improved diagnosis and support for, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/alcohol-framework-2018-preventing-harm-next-steps-changing-relationship-alcohol/pages/2/>

The Fetal Alcohol Advisory and Support Team (FAAST) has a wide range of information sheets available on their website: <https://www.nhsaaa.net/services-a-to-z/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-fasd/> and also

created a guide for “Making sense of FASD: A guide for parents and carers”, which provides supports for families caring for a child with FASD: <https://www.nhs.uk/media/5702/fasd-info-for-parents-carers-online.pdf>

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome UK is a national organisation with information and helpline www.nofas-uk.org/

Practitioner Notes

