



## 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 prepare 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 prepare 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/ Before Preparing for Parenthood (blank version)
- Handout: Traffic lights/ Before Preparing for Parenthood
- Healthier Pregnancies Better Lives Poster
- Health Before Pregnancy (NHS Lanarkshire/Young Scot) (duration 1 minute 18)  
<https://youtu.be/9MIACvEuy8>

*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 **preparing for the possibility of creating 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 any pregnancy happens?

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 start a pregnancy and 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?

Do you think that most people plan or prepare for their baby?

Get some responses then share the slide with the statistics.

### **Almost 50,000 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.

Nearly one-half of pregnancies are unintended and more than half are not well prepared for.

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

5. Explain that there is lots of evidence that a big, positive difference in the health and wellbeing of parents and baby can be made by actually preparing well for pregnancy, instead of it 'just

happening'. 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 especially what they actually do (or don't do) before the beginning of any pregnancy.. 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 prospective parent(s) prepare well to achieve a positive pregnancy and a healthy baby. It's not just a matter of good luck.

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 what could lead to an unhealthy pregnancy and/or an unhealthy baby. Remind them in the introduction that you want them to think about: what would get in the way, before pregnancy, of a woman's good physical health and mental wellbeing during pregnancy. They can also consider what might the prospective father/partner do that would not be helpful to the prospective mother and this 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
- Social situation
- Health
- 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 a parent/parents to be 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 a pregnancy.
8. **Before Preparing for Parenthood/Getting ready for a healthy pregnancy.** Give the young people the 'blank' traffic lights prop with the Avoid/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 preparing to get pregnant about the things they should avoid, 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 AVOID 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) use while pregnant or at risk of becoming pregnant. The next 2 slide read:

**The importance of an alcohol free pregnancy**

By making the choice not to drink any alcohol **while pregnant or preparing for a baby** parents are helping to keep their baby safe and healthy.

Drinking alcohol when pregnant can cause permanent, irreversible brain damage called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Since women may not know a pregnancy has started for well over a month, they may be drinking while pregnant, even if they planned to stop drinking while pregnant. Not drinking alcohol is the safest, smartest choice when pregnancy is likely/possible – for example, when effective contraception is not always being used.

Please remember that when it comes to alcohol:

- If you are drinking alcohol, don't get pregnant.
- If you are pregnant, don't drink alcohol.

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.

Dr Jonathan Sher is currently leading a programme at the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland called *Healthier Pregnancies, Better Lives* (@HPBL\_Scot). There is a poster about HPBL provided in this unit.

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)**

The Scottish Government estimates that approximately 172,000 children, young people and adults in Scotland who are currently affected by FASD. The vast majority have never been officially diagnosed and properly assisted or supported. *At least 3%* of babies born in Scotland are estimated to have FASD, which means around 1,500 new cases each year. Yet, FASD is potentially 100% preventable. There are two guaranteed ways to prevent FASD: 1) no alcohol at any time during pregnancy; or , 2) no pregnancy while continuing to drink alcohol.

Links for further information on FASD:

The most recent resource on FASD in the UK is **The Time is Now:** <https://nationalfasd.org.uk/learn-more/policy/innovation-best-practice/>

**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.nhsaaa.net/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/](http://www.nofas-uk.org/) NES/SG eLearning resource on FASD: <https://www.qnis.org.uk/invisible-not-inconsequential-fasd/>

### Practitioner Notes

