

Developing and piloting a peer mentoring intervention to reduce teenage pregnancy in looked-after children and care leavers: an exploratory randomised controlled trial

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Plain English summary

Reduce teenage pregnancy in LAC and care leavers

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Plain English summary

We developed a peer mentoring programme for young people aged 14–18 years who are in care. The mentors were young people aged 19–25 years who also had experience of the care system. The main aim was to explore whether this intervention could be effective in reducing teenage pregnancy rates in this group.

The mentor was required to meet with their mentee on a regular basis to offer support and deliver information around sexual relationships. All mentors were trained and received support throughout the intervention. The intervention was designed to last for 1 year but most relationships ended prematurely.

We intended to recruit 48 young people aged 14–18 years across three local authorities; however, only 26 were recruited. Interviews were conducted with mentors and mentees at the beginning of the study and 1 year later. We also conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys with young people and social care professionals to explore views on the intervention and reasons for low recruitment. We found that local authorities experienced difficulties managing the intervention and social workers often excluded young people from participating.

There was some indication of increased self-esteem and improved decision-making in mentees. Mentors also reported improved confidence. However, more support would need to be provided to mentors in any future trial.

Given the small numbers we are unable to assess the impact of the intervention on teenage pregnancy rates. Although a full trial cannot be recommended, a further small-scale exploratory study incorporating the recommendations from this trial would be feasible.

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