

Major collaborative study explores information poverty amongst young first-time mothers

October 30 2015

Support for young first-time mothers in access to information on health, social care and education is to be explored in a study led at the University of Strathclyde.

Researchers from the University, in partnership with Glasgow Life and Barnardo's, are examining 'information poverty' around these and other issues, as well as ways in which public information providers can help the mothers, and their children, to prosper in the digital age.

The UK has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in western Europe, with associated conception rates related to multiple deprivation indexes. Groups identified as being at risk are disadvantaged and disengaged, and concerns have been raised about fair access to information, both digital and printed.

Cara Jardine, a Research Associate in Strathclyde's Department of Computer and Information Sciences, is among the researchers on the project. She said: "There are complex, and as yet not fully understood, access barriers and internalised behavioural barriers. The former are influenced by issues around the 'digital divide' and information literacy issues and the latter by social structures and norms.

"We believe these barriers put young first time mothers, and in turn their children, at risk of living a disengaged existence in an impoverished

information world.

"This study aims to advance our understanding of information poverty and to contribute significantly to the important discussion of how public information providers can support and empower young first time mothers in seeking information. We also aim to help providers develop new services that are appropriate for young first time mothers."

The study, the largest funded project of its kind to be conducted in the UK, marks the first time Glasgow Life has worked in partnership on a research study of this scale with both an academic and a charitable organisation.

With more than 7000 babies born in Glasgow every year, the range of services offered to new parents throughout Glasgow's 32 community libraries, and the iconic Mitchell Library, has grown considerably over the years. Glasgow Life has transformed the service to allow parents and children to participate in a vast array of activities and events designed to aid childhood development, together with the more traditional services associated with a library.

Councillor Archie Graham, Chair of Glasgow Life, said: "Glasgow Libraries provides the city's residents with a vital, life-changing service, delivered at the very heart of the community. Throughout our libraries we've seen first-hand the difference that access to, and an understanding of, reading and information services can have in improving the life chances for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

"Through a number of our initiatives, including Bounce and Rhyme and Toddlers Tales we've created opportunities for parents and their children, regardless of their socio-economic position, to enjoy reading, a vital skill for people of all ages, with proven links to improved health and wellbeing, educational attainment and employability. We welcome

this study into how organisations, such as our own, can empower young, first-time mothers and their babies, to grow and prosper in a safe environment."

Martin Crewe, Director of Barnardo's Scotland, said: "Barnardo's Scotland is delighted to partner with Strathclyde University and Glasgow Life on this important study. We believe in the power of collaboration and firmly believe that this research will support our work in transforming the lives of the most vulnerable children.

"The report will also help strengthen our understanding of the needs of young, first-time mothers and the issues that they face in having their [information](#) needs adequately met. It will provide us with the insight that we need to tackle issues of engagement in new and innovative ways alongside our partners, enhancing early years provision and improving the life chances of vulnerable families."

Provided by University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Citation: Major collaborative study explores information poverty amongst young first-time mothers (2015, October 30) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-10-major-collaborative-explores-poverty-young.html>

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