



**KEEPING OUR KIDS
SAFE AT HOME**

|| The Project

May-Aug 2009

A scoping project designed to gather information on the development of a resource targeted at teen parents, which addresses personal violence and strategies for minimising child abuse and neglect

20 Teen Parents

70 Practitioners

10 Family/whānau

|| “Young mothers, particularly those who are unsupported or in violent relationships, are more likely to carry out, or fail to intervene to stop severe abuse of children than older mothers. However, it is the factors associated with young parenthood rather than the age of the mother per se that raise the risk of maltreatment of children: unplanned pregnancy, stress from low income, depression, high dependency, inadequate support and lack of parenting knowledge and skill”

(Klevens & Whitaker, 2007; McCormack et al, 2006 *cited in* Ministry of Social Development, 2008).

Teen Parents & Interpersonal Violence

There are currently few or no resources targeted specifically at teen parents (<20 years) which address interpersonal violence and strategies for minimising child abuse and neglect.

Those most at risk of partner violence are:

- Māori women
- Women beneficiaries
- Young people aged 15-24
- People living in rented accommodation (Families Commission, 2009)

The stats:

- In 2006, seven percent of men convicted of male-assaults female offences were in their teens
- 42 convicted cases of assault on a child by offenders aged 15 to 19 since 2000 (Families Commission, 2009)

Engaging Teen Parents

Teen parents are a particularly challenging group to engage with when utilising traditional public education campaigns.

Teen parents are more likely than most to:

- Frequently move house.
- Possess prepay mobile phones or have no phone at all.
- Have very limited access to the internet.
- Have above-average rates of illiteracy or learning difficulties.
- Have above-average contact with statutory welfare agencies.
- Live in deprivation.

Engaging Teen Parents (cont...)

Designing a resource which is going to appeal to and be used by teen parents is a challenge.

A successful resource must:

- Address the cognitive developmental needs of teen parents.
- Understand and affirm their roles as parents.
- Contain enough information and strategies for keeping themselves and their children safe without alienating them with too much information...
- Allow for the mechanics of the teen brain.



Help!

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT TEEN PARENTS AND HELPING



Accessing help

Teen parents are most likely to want help from other teen parents

Friends, whānau, counsellors, mentors and teachers were identified as other primary sources of help (both positive and negative)

Teen parents are extremely sensitive to judgement; they feel they are less likely to be judged by those close to them.

Being judged severely impacts on teen parents' confidence and positive perception of themselves

Barriers to help seeking

Fear of being judged a 'poor parent.'

Fear of the process

Fears that their child/ren will be taken from them

A lack of understanding of the severity of the situation

Danger which isn't obvious or immediate

Wanting to "keep the peace"

*...you're just like "far out" because you're doing the best that you can for your baby and all these organisations are pounding you – like having to go to all these different things and meet with all these people and you don't even know who they are or know why you're going there...
(Young Mother)*

The types of information teen parents want

- Definitions of abuse and what constitutes “family violence” and “child maltreatment and neglect”
- Information which helps them understand that their negative feelings around parenting (e.g. frustration, anger) are “normal”
- Information which normalises help seeking

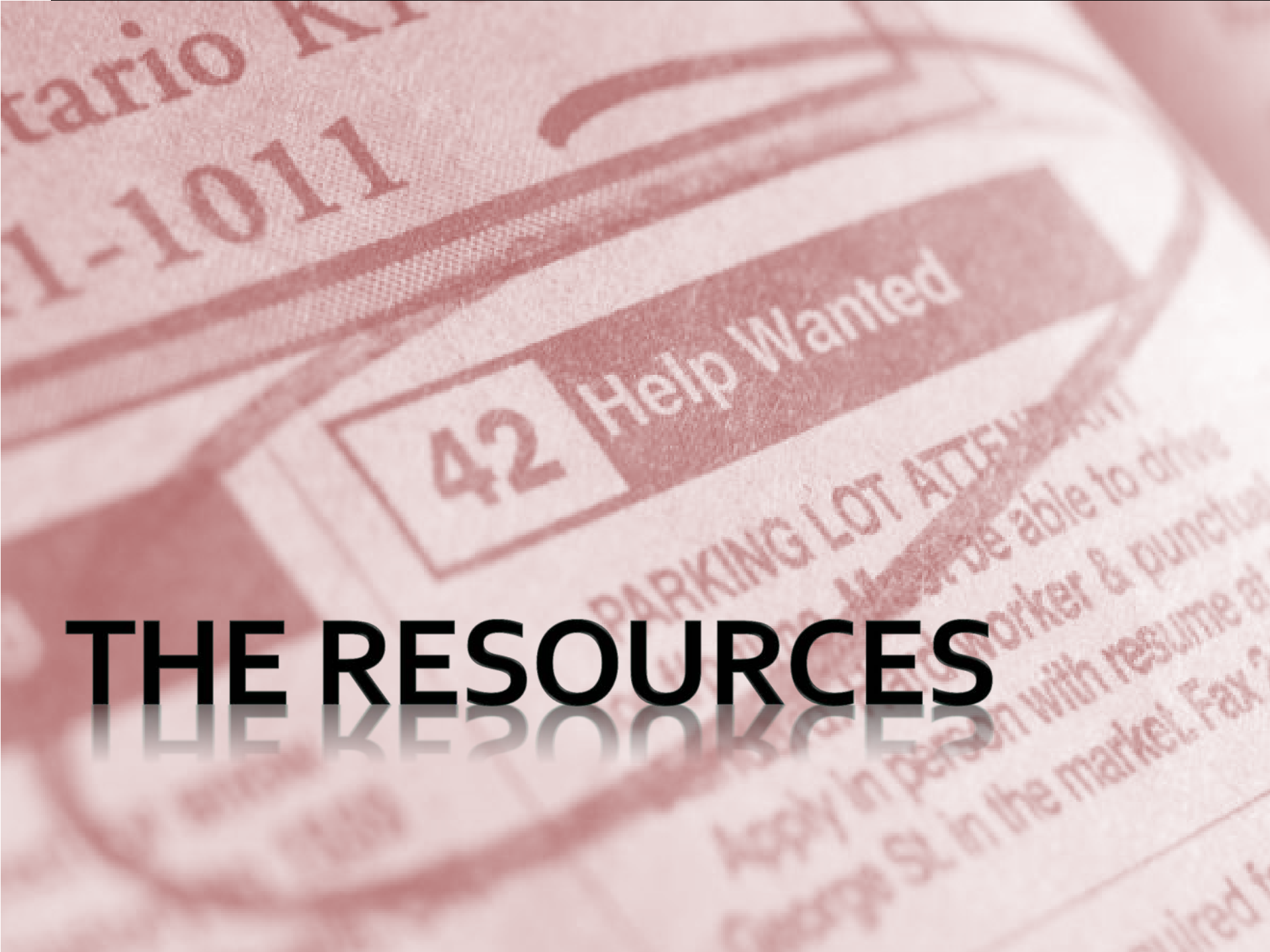
“Make getting help normal, like it’s OK to get help.” (Young Mother)

- Real stories and advice from other teen parents, particularly around keeping your children safe (e.g. ground rules)

“... I was like this is (my son’s) house, so you have to respect him and his privacy...that’s the rules when you’re in my house.” (Young mother)

“Doesn’t matter who they are, never leave your kids with them alone.” (Young Father)

- Information on baby and child development (particularly information designed around developing empathy).



THE RESOURCES

Resource format

A single resource is unlikely to meet all the needs of teen parents and practitioners

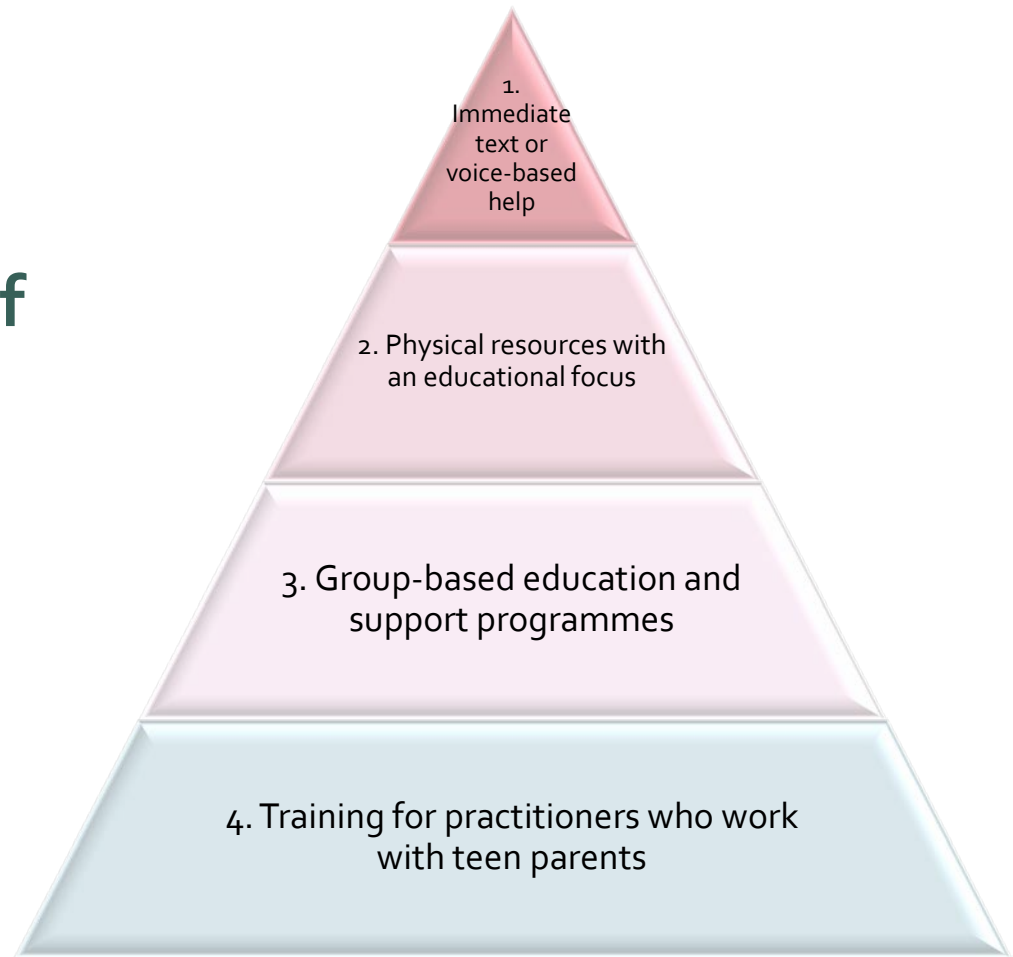
Layered resources with a consistent message and teen-parent friendly method of delivery are more likely to be successful

*“Different resources suit the diverse youth population”
(Teen parent helper)*



Resource format

The research recommended that four separate types of resources be produced, with each part addressing a different need for different groups.





1. Immediate text or voice-based help

When they ask for help, teen parents want an immediate answer

A text- or voice-based helpline will enable teen parents to have immediate help

The service should be free and available 24 hours.

24 hour helpline

Text or phone-based

Utilise existing service (e.g. Youthline)

Easy-to-remember number

Internet-based facility

2. Physical Resources

Any resource designed for teen parents must have:

- Success stories
- Colour and graphics, including photos of other teen parents.
- Text presented in “bites”, broken up with quotes.
- Advice from teen parents
- Interactive elements
- Give-aways
- Information on help services,
- Teen parents closely involved in the planning and production.

An interactive internet site

Magazine (with give-aways)

Quick-reference pamphlets

DVD's

Television & media



3. Group education and support

Non-instructional
Non-threatening
Non-judgemental
Youth appropriate
Community based
Culturally safe & responsive
Designed to build individual and group capacity

Scrapbooking

Dream charts / dream wall

Weaving classes

Skill building (e.g. Cooking)



4. People

Design training for people who work with teen parents in consultation with

- Teen Parent agencies
- Teen Parent service coordinators
- Teen parents

Working with teen parents

Understanding the needs of teen parents

Understanding specific issues faced by teen parents

Local services and legal rights