

## STORY TWO - ALISON\* AGED 19 GAVE BIRTH 4 MONTHS AGO

**Were you scared about having the baby? And what to do afterwards?**

Not really but I was scared about coping with my baby, David\* on my own.

**Now that you have had your baby, are you happy or still scared?**

I'm happy although it's going to be a bit of a struggle, but I think it's mostly to do with depression and the struggling alone part.

**What was it like before he was born?**

It was alright actually although I wasn't able to go out and see my mates that much during the pregnancy.

**Is it different from how you'd predicted it to be?**

Before David was born, I had no thoughts about sleepless nights and it's hit me hard now but he usually sleeps calmly through the night.

**Has anything changed (physically) since his birth?**

Yeah, I've changed as a person since he was born. I'm different and my friends keep saying I do look different. My body's also changed but it's nothing I can't handle.

**Can you still do the things you did before he was born like going raving with friends.**

To a certain extent but I can't take advantage because my mum's supporting me with most things.

**Does David's father have much input into both of your relationships?**

Yes, he's there for David always and we're going to get a flat of our own in time but even though we don't live together, whenever I'm stressed out or tired I just phone him up and tell him to take David for the time being. I think David likes being with his dad. It's all about having a deep (man's) voice because he never cries when they're together. I guess it's because

when David was inside me he got used to his father's deep voice.

**What's the difference between your daily routine before you gave birth and since giving birth?**

Well before I would get up a bit early because I had school, but usually I'd sleep for ages, get up, go out and then go home. Now it's sleepless nights, migraine nights, early mornings, because I need to feed him, bathe him and look after him.

**Are there any advantages of teen motherhood?**

Watching him grow up will be the best thing and making sure he has the best in the future. I'm going to make sure he goes to the best schools and gets good grades.

**What are the disadvantages of teen motherhood? (what you miss)**

When you are a teen mother, you have to grow up quicker than you think. There are more responsibilities when you take a child on board. The main things are no sleep and early mornings and you don't get much money to buy yourself stuff because everything's spent on him. It's basically a 24/7 job being a parent. I'm going to miss seeing my friends for quite a long time.

**What about getting a job or career?**

I'm still in maternity leave right now because you get 13 weeks from that. In school I'm only doing English and Maths GCSE. I'm going to do a beauty course when things have settled down for us.

**Any advice you can give to forthcoming teen mothers out there?**

You need lots of support. Don't take advantage of support you are given. If you're offered help then take it. If **END** haven't got any one to help you, then you need to speak to

"Sex under the age of 16 is illegal - getting advice is not! You should never feel under pressure to have sex at any age and it should always be your choice. If you want to chat to someone about relationships, sex, contraception and more . . . check out the back page for details of young people friendly services in Kingston!"

## FACTS ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY

BY JOANNE WILSON, TEENAGE PREGNANCY CO-ORDINATOR

In England and Wales about 39,560 aged under 18 became pregnant in 2003. Becoming pregnant can be a time of great happiness and joy, whilst for others it can be difficult and scary. Family and friends may react to the news of pregnancy in different and sometimes surprising ways, and finding out your girlfriend is pregnant can also be a shock. Dads-to-be / partners might need support too!

If you think you might be pregnant, it is essential to get advice and support as early as possible; from an adult you trust or pop along to one of the local young people's health clinics at KU19 or Magic Roundabout. There are options if you feel it is not something you want and people to support you, but telling someone as soon as possible will help you to make decisions easier.

If you choose to continue with your pregnancy, it is important for all mums and dads/partners prepare for the birth. In Kingston young parent friendly ante-natal sessions are a really useful opportunity to meet other parents, get information on a healthy diet and exercise, practice breathing, relaxation and good positions for labour and birth and talk to health workers about any worries. You will be invited to sessions at about 24 weeks of pregnancy. Your midwife can also support you in making decisions including pain relief for the birth and breastfeeding.

Adjusting to being a parent can be hard for anybody, but it can be particularly difficult for younger people. As a young mum or dad you may not be able to go out so often, may have to buy things for the baby and not yourselves and it

can be hard to maintain old friendships. Talking and meeting with other young mums and dads can be a good way to share experiences and feel less alone.

After a while, as a young mum or dad you might want to arrange childcare so you can go to work or to school, college or university. Care to Learn provides grants of up to £5125 per child per year to help with the costs of childcare if you go into education.

Check out the advice page for more information on the services to help young people on sex and relationships and [www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk)