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Thematic axis: Historical and cultural nursing and healthcare issues.  
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**Title: A window on the system:** professional's views and approaches to working with teenage parents evident in Serious Case Reviews in the UK.

### **Introduction**

This analysis explores the multidisciplinary team's work with teenage parents in Serious Case Reviews (SCR) in the UK. Across recent decades young parents in the UK have been publically scrutinized. The feckless single mother stereotype persists, with unfounded accusations of immaturity and welfare dependence (Bekaert & Bradley, 2019). Young parents frequently face such perceptions in their interactions with health and social care professionals. Competing cultural expectations for childhood and parenthood are notable when a child of young parents suffers abuse.

### **Objectives**

SCRs are multidisciplinary reviews conducted when a child has died or come to significant harm, to establish what can be learned in relation to the way in which professionals across disciplines work individually, and together, to safeguard children. The review explores how young parents are constructed within SCRs.

### **Methodology**

SCRs are publically available in a repository curated by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Reviews were selected through keyphrase searches: teen pregnancy/teenage parenthood/young parenthood. Fifty-two reports were reviewed. Drawing on a feminist data analysis method, the Listening Guide, a specific reading of the reviews was conducted to highlight narratives illustrating social structures and cultural contexts, with an a-priori focus on the construction of young parents in professional practice. Themes were reflexively developed from this analysis.

### **Results**

Negative assumptions regarding young parenthood pervaded the documents. Youth was viewed as a vulnerability, although cumulative negative life events were evidence of vulnerability rather than youth itself. Whilst vulnerability was acknowledged there were parallel expectations of the parents, and specifically the young mother as protector of the child(ren) from adults that pose a risk, as coordinator of myriad appointments, and to comply with complex court orders (Scourfield, 2002). Whilst some professionals recognised the child status of one or both parents, protection of their child took precedence, with little concession in practice to the developing adolescent parent (Hanson and Holmes, 2015).

### **Conclusions**

Cumulative negative life events, gendered and infantcentric professional practice can leave young parents unsupported in the face of complex difficulties compounded by parenthood.

Trauma informed multidisciplinary practice that considers young parent's experience, individual and family needs and adolescent development can support their positive intentions in caring for their children.

Keywords:

safeguarding  
child protection  
teenage parents  
teenage mother  
adolescence

## References

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