

# Family Education Trust

(Family and Youth Concern)

A Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3503533; Registered Charity No. 1070500

Jubilee House, 19-21 High Street, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7LB

tel: 020 8894 2525 fax: 020 8894 3535

e-mail: [info@familyeducation.plus.com](mailto:info@familyeducation.plus.com) web-site: [www.famyouth.org.uk](http://www.famyouth.org.uk)

---

## **Promotion of 'morning-after pill' to under-16s is misguided and counterproductive, says national family charity**

**Media information: embargo 00.01 on 3 December 2007**

The vigorous promotion of the 'morning-after pill' to girls under the age of 16 by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) is misguided and owes more to sheer desperation or blind ideology than to any research evidence, according to a new report issued today by the Family Education Trust.

Data obtained by the Family Education Trust under the Freedom of Information Act reveals that 128 PCTs (84 per cent) have authorised the supply of the 'morning-after pill' to girls under the age of 16. Of this number, 70 per cent said they would be prepared, under some circumstances, to insist on provision of the drug to underage girls as a condition of granting a pharmacy licence.

The majority of PCTs cited high teenage pregnancy rates and the government's teenage pregnancy strategy as the basis for their policy permitting the supply of the emergency pill to girls under the age of 16, yet none of them attempted to cite any evidence that such an approach would contribute to lower teenage pregnancy rates.

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented:

The confidential provision of the 'morning-after pill' to teenage girls is a key strand in the government's teenage pregnancy strategy and extravagant claims have been made about its ability to reduce unwanted pregnancy and abortion rates. However, the fact that not a single PCT was able to point to any research evidence linking easy access to the emergency pill with a reduction in teenage pregnancy rates, suggests that their policies are being pursued out of sheer desperation or blind ideology.

*continued over...*

---

Trustees: Arthur Cornell MEd F.Coll.P (Chairman); Betty, Lady Grantchester; Dr John Guly MB BS DMJ;  
Eric Hester BA (Vice Chairman); Simon J Ling MA FCA (Hon Treasurer); Denis Riches BSc (Secretary);  
Mrs Valerie Riches (Founder President); Dr Trevor Stammers BSc FRCGP; Robert Whelan MA

Sponsors: Professor John Bonnar MA MD FRCOG; The Viscountess Brentford OBE; Peter Dawson OBE BSc FRSA;  
The Baroness Elles; Michael McKenzie CB QC; The Duke of Montrose; The Baroness O'Cathain OBE; Professor Dennis O'Keeffe

The report, *Waking up to the morning-after pill*, refers to recent international evidence suggesting that the confidential provision of contraception and the emergency pill is not making the slightest difference to teenage pregnancy and abortion rates and may in fact be contributing to a rise in sexual activity among underage girls.

Norman Wells observed:

Over recent years we have witnessed the systematic removal of every restraint which in previous generations served as a disincentive to underage sexual activity. Sex education in many schools has set out to break down the natural inhibitions of children with regard to sexual conduct; the age of consent is rarely enforced, so young people no longer have any fear of legal proceedings; the ready availability of contraception means that a girl's fear of pregnancy is no longer considered a good enough reason for rejecting her boyfriend's advances; and confidentiality policies mean that a girl need not worry about what her parents would think about her being sexually active, obtaining contraception, being treated for a sexually transmitted infection or even having an abortion, because they need not know.

Against such a background, there can be no doubt that the free and confidential provision of the emergency pill to girls under the age of 16 is further promoting a casual approach to sexual relationships. This will inevitably result in more underage sex, more teenage pregnancies, and more sexually transmitted infections.

Rather than persisting with an approach that is failing in the hope that it may 'come good' in the process of time, the report concludes that PCTs should undertake an honest appraisal of their policies regarding the supply of the 'morning-after pill' to under-16s in line with the evidence. It also argues that pharmacies, supermarket chains and schools which are currently supplying the emergency pill to girls below the age of 16 should review their policies and consider the possibility that they may be adding to the problems associated with underage sexual activity rather than contributing to the solution.

Norman Wells remarked:

In the absence of any evidence that the 'morning-after pill' leads to a reduction in under-16 conceptions, it is untenable for PCTs to insist on supply to underage girls as a condition of granting a pharmacy licence.

*continued over...*

Rather than continuing to formulate policy on the assumption that teenagers will engage in sexual activity irrespective of anything parents and teachers say to them, we need to recognise that the majority of young people under the age of 16 are not sexually active, and to support and affirm them in their exercise of self-control. Until we overcome our obsession with sexual expression and our phobia about saving sex for marriage, we are unlikely to make any real progress.

**ENDS**

---

**Waking up to the morning-after pill: How parents are being undermined by the promotion of emergency hormonal birth control to under-16s** by Norman Wells and Helena Hayward is published by Family Education Trust, Jubilee House, 19-21 High Street, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7LB, tel 020 8894 2525, [www.famyouth.org.uk](http://www.famyouth.org.uk)

ISBN: 978-0-906229-19-4

Price: £6.00 + £1.00 p&p.

---

Family Education Trust is an independent educational charity, without any religious or political affiliations, committed to promoting stable family life and the welfare of children and young people.