

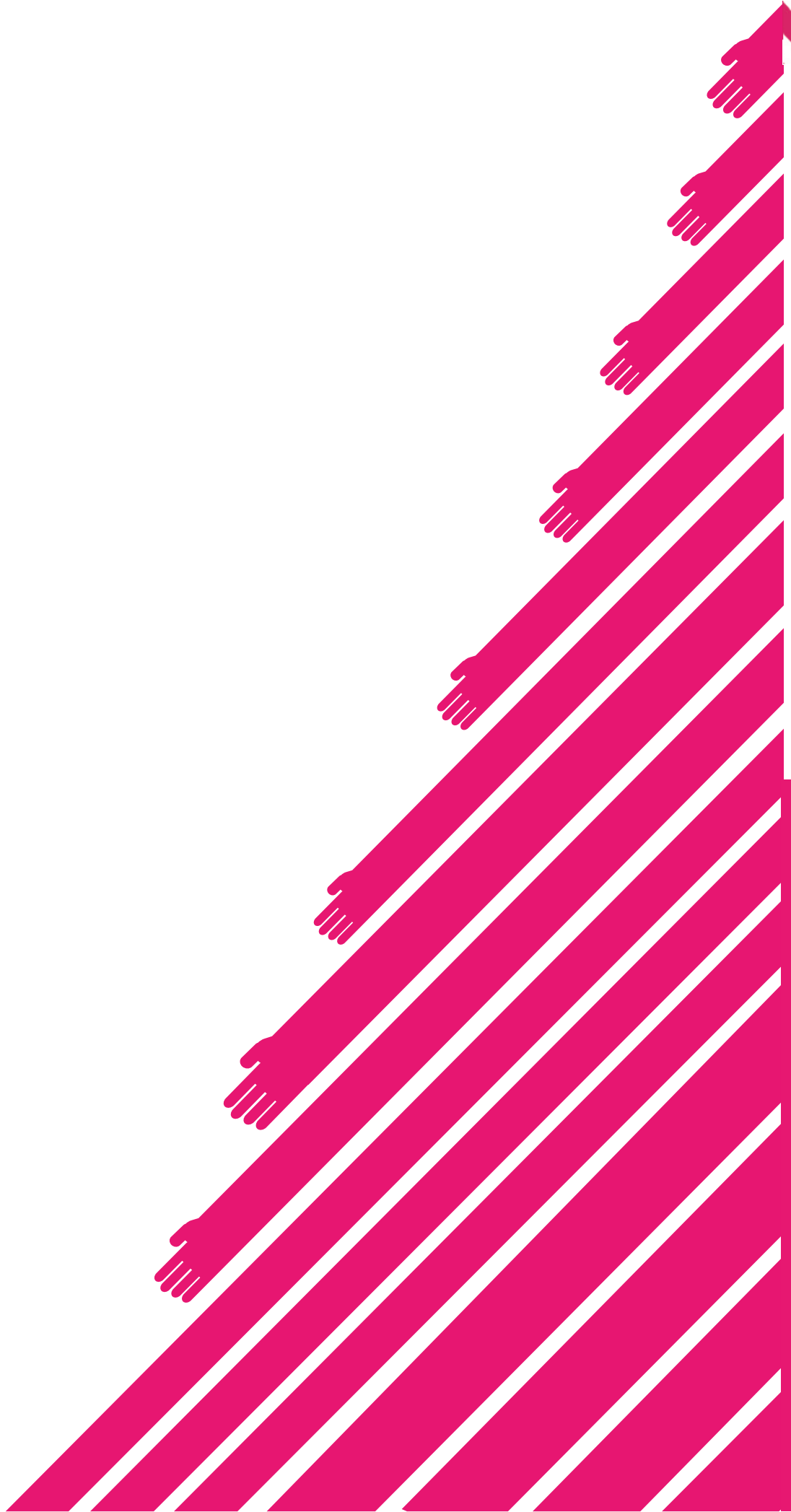
JUNE 2017 TO DECEMBER 2017



NEXT STEPS

WITH YOU, EVERY STEP OF THE WAY







Greetings from all of us at Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Ltd (Babes)!

I am excited to present the 3rd edition of our newsletter. As in our previous two editions, we have many interesting articles and information we would love to share with you.

2017 was a very good year for Babes as we saw an estimated 27% increase in our case numbers compared to 2016, and this is likely due to an increase in our outreach efforts and our presence on social media. 2017 also saw our very first Babes Open Mic Night which had very good reviews from both the participants and the audience. We are working on making this an annual event that people can identify as an iconic nBabes event. We are hoping that, through this event, we will reach out to more people, particularly youths who will come forward to offer a helping hand to Babes and to reduce the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy.

In this issue, we will be sharing with you questions that are usually raised by the members of the public, some of the struggles and challenges we face, and a heartfelt story shared by one of our teen mums whom we assisted after she had delivered. We prefer to journey with the girls while they are pregnant but we do assist girls after they have delivered as well on a case by case basis. We will also be very busy for the next 6 months as you will see in our upcoming key events. We will be delighted if you could join us!

Christina Vejan
Executive Director



In 2017, we journeyed with more than 90 teenage girls and supported them in their unplanned pregnancies. Through understanding their unique needs, we ensured that they were empowered to make informed decisions about their pregnancies and obtained the resources they needed to be well-supported. In this issue, we would like to take the opportunity to address some of the common questions we usually receive from the public.

WHAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE/SUPPORT DO THE TEENAGE GIRLS WHO APPROACH BABES NEED THE MOST?

Family support is what most of the girls need. Many needed support to break the news to their family. Practical assistance such as shelter or interim accommodation, infant care placement, financial assistance, job opportunities and emotional support are some of the other matters we help the girls with.

WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS IN ASSISTING THEM?

In the course of our casework, we do face several challenges. We take a mother-centric approach to our casework and encourage our service-users to make informed decisions about their pregnancies. At times, however, we deal with emotional dilemma as we feel that a service-user could be making an unwise decision that may not be in the best interests of the girl and her child. Ultimately, we have to respect their decision and do our best to support and guide them.

Our goal is to ensure that these girls regain a sense of normalcy in their lives and that is often possible with the support of their families. We have been placed in situations where they need our presence and support in breaking the news to their family. However, the challenge in conducting such case conferences is putting across to all the involved parties that we take a neutral stance. These situations can become tense, especially if the family assumes that our presence means that we are taking sides and they can become very defensive (even physical) with us.

For some of their needs, sometimes there is very little we can assist them with as it is not within our control. As we do not run a shelter or offer direct financial assistance, we do face some difficulties finding shelter and infant care for girls who are estranged from their families.

HOW CAN WE (THE PUBLIC) GET INVOLVED TO LEND THEM A HELPING HAND?

Donations! With donations, we can help the girls to fund their education, purchase baby necessities for them, food rations and so on. We are also constantly on the lookout for volunteer befrienders and agencies or employers who can provide training and employment for our girls/partners/families. Infant care placement is another area we would like more assistance in. We hope more infant care centres will come forward and offer heavily subsidised or free care for Babes' service users. This is something we would be working on too.





BABES FACTS

IN 2017, APPROXIMATELY

85%

OF OUR SERVICE-USERS CHOSE
PARENTHOOD,

10% CHOSE ABORTION AND

5% CHOSE TO PUT THEIR CHILD INTO
FOSTER CARE OR ADOPTION.

CLOSE TO **80%**
OF OUR SERVICE-USERS WHO CHOSE
PARENTHOOD ARE

**SINGLE MOTHERS
WITH NO SUPPORT
FROM THEIR PARTNERS.**



TEENAGE GIRLS SPEAK



“I HAD TO DEAL WITH THE NEWS OF

AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY WHILE STRUGGLING TO MAKE ENDS MEET”

“I became pregnant unexpectedly when I was 19 years old. My boyfriend, Matt, was a Malaysian who was 27 years old at that time and on a 3-month visit pass. Back then, he was all the family I had as my mother was in a nursing home, bedridden from a stroke some years ago and my father left us soon after. At that period of time, still young and unaware of things happening around me, I was alone with no guidance.

Soon after, I became pregnant and did not know what to do. However, I was certain of my decision of not wanting to abort or abandon my baby. Matt promised that he would stay true to me and our child. Being abandoned by my family, his words were very comforting and I felt more confident of having the child. However, soon the reality of having a foreign boyfriend with a visit pass hit me hard as whenever he returned to Malaysia when his visit pass ended, I would be all alone. During those times, the fear of him abandoning me would run through my mind over and over again. This fear became so overwhelming that it made me so upset. Thinking about my future made me upset further as I had nothing to look forward to. I was unmarried, unemployed and dependent on Matt to provide just the bare minimum for the two of us from his ad-hoc jobs.

When the baby finally came, we were sorely unprepared. How did we even think we were able to feed another mouth when we were struggling to have 3 proper meals a day ourselves? We lived in a rental flat and did not even own a washing machine then. Taking care of a baby was harder than I imagined. I hated having to wash the clothes and clean the house and very often, I just

hoped that all the problems would just disappear.

But the days remained dismal and dark. The baby's incessant cries drove me into a state of depression. My mind was constantly occupied with the dire state that the three of us were in. It was even worse when Matt went back to Malaysia. There were days when I could not even get up to change the baby's diapers.

It was a stroke of luck when a teenage mum whom I had befriended on Facebook encouraged me to call Babes for support. While Babes usually assist only girls who are pregnant, Babes felt that they should step in as we had no support system at all. Help from Babes came swiftly and we immediately felt comforted. We were given vouchers for groceries, diapers, milk and even a new plastic drawer set. Suddenly we felt things turning out for the better and had hope.

Babes made us feel that we mattered and that made all the difference.

Eventually, things became better; Matt found a stable job in Johor Bahru and I would travel over regularly so our baby could see him. My Babes caseworker counselled us, and Matt felt ready to take the next step. He proposed and we plan to tie the knot when I turn 21.

While the future is still filled with uncertainties, I dare to dream, far beyond the flat's hostile and graffiti-covered walls, for a family that I want to cherish dearly.”

- May*

*names have been changed for confidentiality

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BABES OPEN MIC NIGHT 14 OCTOBER

On 14th October we organised our very first Open Mic night at Blu Jaz Cafe with the theme 'The Morning After'. It was a platform for young talents to showcase their talents, raise awareness and stimulate conversations about teenage pregnancy in Singapore.

With amazing performances from talents such as Aarti Olivia Dubey, The Latecomers and The BLUEmpire, our party of over 80 guests had a night of roaring laughter, music and entertainment. Through this platform, we aim to engage with the youth community and encourage them to think beyond the narrow stereotypes that teenage pregnancy is often relegated to.



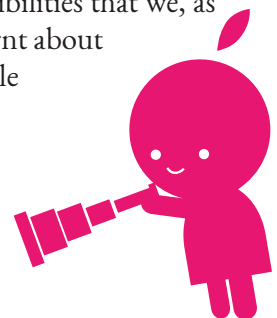


BABES VOLUNTEER BONDING & BEFRIENDING WORKSHOP

29 NOVEMBER

On 29th November, Babes organised our very first volunteer bonding and befriending workshop to kick start our befriender program. 30 of our volunteers came down to join us.

It was an insightful workshop as we delved into the complexities, limitations and possibilities that we, as social workers, do to provide much-needed support to our service users. Volunteers learnt about casework and how they, as volunteers, can play an invaluable role to support a vulnerable teenager in her time of need.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

SKILLS-BASED QUARTERLY WORKSHOPS

To empower the teenage girls we support, Babes conducts skills workshops quarterly with the goal of imparting skill sets that they can potentially utilise in their future career or family setting. With the help of passionate volunteers and partner instructors, we have previously tailored and conducted various interesting and interactive workshops such as Cupcake Fondant Decorating, Financial Literacy, Social Media Entrepreneurship and Healthy Snack-making. If you have interesting skills to impart, do contact us!

HAPPY STORK PROGRAM

December 2017 - April 2018

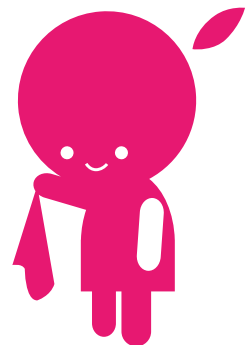
Motherhood in itself can be a trying time for many women, even those with family and community support; what's more for a teenage mother who has to navigate both her pregnancy and the reactions of those around her?

This year, Babes launched our Milk & Diaper program 'Happy Stork' to assist teenage mothers from low-income backgrounds with formula milk and diapers to ensure that their new-born babies are not deprived of the most basic necessities essential in their growing years. If you would like more information on how you can support us in this programme, do email us.

BABES HOUSE-TO-HOUSE DOOR COLLECTION OF RECYCLABLES

March - May 2018

From March to May, Babes will be raising funds by collecting recyclable items, such as newspapers, unwanted clothing and magazines, in Hougang and Punggol. If you are residents of these areas, do look out for us.





BABES PERFORMANCE AS PART OF INWARD BOUND'S FESTIVAL 2018

April 2018

We will be paired with a secondary school to come up with a performance regarding teenage pregnancy. This performance will then be brought to the festival.

BABES DAY

11 May 2018

This is an annual fun-filled activity that we organise for our service-users. It is a day to celebrate the strength and resilience they have showed in their journey regardless of the choices they had made regarding their pregnancy. Filled with fun activities such as henna painting, makeup makeover and manicures, this day is an opportunity for them to let their hair down and have a wonderful time with their friends and family in an environment free of prejudice.

BABES PRODUCTION

June 2018

This June, Babes will be putting up our first ever drama production. It will be an in-depth performance by trained actors to explore the issue of teenage pregnancy in Singapore. Inspired by the stories from our casework, the script will be devised by our own in-house forum theatre actors. This will be a ticketed event at a Black Box Theatre, Singapore.

VOLUNTEER WITH US!

We are always looking for volunteers to fill in roles in areas such as Marketing, Advertising, Events, Public Relations IT / Website, Management, graphic design, etc..

In addition, we are specifically looking for:

1) Befrienders

Befrienders must be at least 21 years of age and able to commit for at least 6 months.

Befrienders are essentially a listening ear and a shoulder for our service-users to lean on.

Having parenting experience is a plus in guiding our service-users in this new stage of their young lives.

2) Copywriters

We are looking for passionate people who would like to pen the courageous stories of our service-users to share with the world.

CONTACT DETAILS



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