

Feature



I told my boyfriend that something was moving in my tummy. It was moving so much," says Amanda, 19. "He said it was probably my intestines and it wouldn't be a worm."

Amanda (not her real name) was 17 years old at the time and was sitting her Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. Even though she hadn't menstruated for six months and had been gaining weight, it hadn't occurred to her that she might be pregnant.

"A classmate told me she didn't have her period because she was stressed. I thought my late period was also due to [exam] stress," she says.

The movement in her stomach continued, though, so she went to a hospital, where a doctor told her the unwelcome news.

"I told my boyfriend, who was waiting for me outside," she says. "He was shocked. Then I burst into tears."

Her boyfriend's mother tried to persuade Amanda to abort the baby.

"His mother and my mother quarrelled. My 'mother-in-law' said she refused to recognise this grandchild. She said we were so young and would face a difficult road if we kept the baby."

After weeks of turmoil, Amanda decided against a termination. "I couldn't give up the baby. She accompanied me ... everywhere. She was like a part of me," she says.

Twelve weeks later, the once-bubbly teenager became a >>

Pictures: Jonathan Wong

interrupted¹

Teenage mothers in Hong Kong can find themselves alienated from their peers and trapped in a life of drudgery with little to aim for. **Sherry Lee** looks at what is being done to help these youngsters.