



# **Report on Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland's Engagement with Young People on Sexual Health Services**

**June 2015**

## 1. WHAT IS HEALTHWATCH

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) established Local Healthwatch as the new consumer champion for health and social care services for adults and children in England. Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland aims to be a strong, independent, trusted and effective voice and a champion for local people, influencing health and social care delivery and supporting people to access health and social care services. It will strive to ensure the best possible quality and choice in health, social care and wellbeing services for the benefit of all living and working in Redcar and Cleveland.

## 2. AIM & BACKGROUND

A full sexual health service review and re-procurement is currently being undertaken, led by the Tees Valley Public Health Shared Service, on behalf of the four local authorities on Teesside with a view to re-procuring an integrated sexual health service for Teesside from 1st April 2016. The service will be required to meet national and local quality standards; reflect local need; and offer seamless care to patients across Teesside.

To help inform the Authorities' commissioning plans, Tees Valley Public Health Shared Services carried out a consultation with the public and stakeholders during April 2015.

The Sexual Health Needs Assessment undertaken in 2013 highlighted that in Redcar and Cleveland there were:-

- Increasing rates of gonorrhoea infections, currently a rate of 22.2/100,000. However, this is less than 40.6/100,000 in the North East as a whole, although the number of infections has doubled between 2010 and 2012. Gonorrhoea infection rates are higher in deprived areas and are most common in young people aged 20-24.
- Increasing rates of chlamydia infections/diagnoses (rate of 201/100,000 compared to 209 in North East and 182 in England). Rates are highest in IMD groups 3 and 5 and in 20 -25 age group
- Genital herpes: This has seen an increase but the Redcar & Cleveland rate is 39/100,000 compared to 55 in North East
- 71% of all STI diagnoses were in young people aged 15-24
- Highest teenage pregnancy rates of more than 65/1000 women less than 18 years of age in Grangetown , Brotton, Coatham, Lockwood and South Bank. This is more than twice the national average and England has the highest rate of any country in Western Europe.

- Highest teenage pregnancy numbers in Brotton ,Grangetown, South Bank, Skelton and West Dyke
- EHC (emergency hormonal contraception): 1227 doses issued in 2012/13, between 50 and 175 per month, most frequently used by 18-24year olds,

Considering the high level of STI's and teenage pregnancies within Redcar and Cleveland, Healthwatch met with Tees Valley Public Health Services and agreed that Healthwatch would gather views of young people on current sexual health services, if there were any barriers to them using sexual health services and how they would like services to be delivered in the future to help inform the review.

Healthwatch has also met with the commissioned consultation provider, NWA, to suggest areas where deeper engagement could be carried out as well as to ensure that any engagement avoids duplication and adds value to the overall picture.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland compiled three questions to ask young people in which they were able to give free responses. Healthwatch carried out engagement events at Freeborough Academy in Brotton and Redcar and Cleveland College in Redcar. Staff at The Junction in Redcar also distributed the questions to their groups and we also held more in-depth discussions with our young Information Champions to try and get a deeper insight into issues affecting young people.

### **4. FINDINGS**

In total Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland spoke to 116 young people. A detailed breakdown of responses can be found in Appendix A. The young people were asked three questions which covered current use of services, any barriers to using the services and how they would like future services to be delivered.

***We spoke to 116 young people***

***What is the most important thing to you when using sexual health services?  
What are your reasons for not using sexual health services, if any?  
How do you think the service can be made better?***

The responses to all three questions can be categorised into the following themes.

#### 4.1 Awareness

Awareness of services is important for young people to use current services, lack of awareness can be a barrier to using them and is important for their future use.

- Knowing where to go and how to access information was listed as an important factor in using services. Students expressed that this information should be readily available and easy to access.
- Some students were unaware of the role of sexual health services and the benefits to them. Many have continued to use their GP for services that they could access through sexual health services.
- A lack of knowledge of the services they offer or a 'fear of the unknown' was stated as a barrier to using the service.
- A lack of awareness of where the service is delivered was a reason given by students for not using services. At Redcar & Cleveland College students were unsure as to when the session was held. However Healthwatch was informed by students after our visit that stickers had been put in toilets to inform students when it was held.
- Many students stated that to improve service provision in the future there was a need for a greater promotion of the service to increase awareness not only of where services are located but also as to what they offer to remove the 'mystery' and embarrassment of using them. Some students thought that social media could be better used when targeting young people and that greater emphasis should be made on making the service more appealing to young people.

#### 4.2 Access

- Students expressed that services provided in easy to access location and opening times was an important factor in using sexual health services.
- Many students expressed that a 'drop-in' service would be most ideal as being able to see someone as soon as possible was important to them. It must be noted however that some services, although provided in an easy to access location are not always ideal. Services are provided at Redcar and Cleveland College but are not heavily used by students due to a lack of privacy.

### 4.3 Confidentiality

- Comments indicated that young people thought it important that the service provided was confidential and enough privacy was afforded them in order for them to feel comfortable and at ease. Students at Redcar and Cleveland College expressed a reluctance to use the service provided in the College as it is accessed from the main canteen area where fellow students can see who is 'coming and going' and didn't want others 'to know about their business'.
- Some students expressed that they were reluctant to use services as they were concerned that their parents would be informed. They were not aware that they have the same rights to confidentiality as an adult.

### 4.4 Attitude

- Students indicated that it was important that when they are using the service they are made to feel welcome and are treated respectfully. For some the thought they would be judged or made to feel embarrassed by staff was a barrier to them using the service.
- Students expressed that they would feel more comfortable if they could choose whether they could see a male or female member of staff.

### 4.5 Stigma

- The stigma associated with using sexual health services was stated by some students as a reason for them being reluctant to use the service. Many expressed that they felt scared or embarrassed of what other people may think of them for using the service.
- For the future provision of services students expressed that they would welcome a reduction in the stigma associated with accessing sexual health services. They suggested that changing the name of the service to make it more user friendly would be beneficial. Many students said that seeing the sign 'Sexual Health Services' above the entrance to some services was off putting.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland recommend that Tees Valley Public Health Services consider the following regarding the future provision of Sexual Health Services for young people within Redcar & Cleveland.

- 5.1 Ensure that there is equal provision of services in all areas of Redcar & Cleveland; that there is a range of ways to access services and that they are delivered in an appropriate setting.
- 5.2 Ensure that a robust awareness strategy is developed that increases awareness of services and reduces the stigma attached to using them.
- 5.3 Ensure that staff have the right skills, values and competencies to deal with a varied and changing population.

Appendix A

**What is the most important thing to you when using sexual health services?**

- Confidentiality
- Privacy
- An understanding attitude
- Receiving private helpful care
- Be treated respectfully
- Being able to talk to the person and getting what you want from the services
- Non judgemental
- Easy access/opening times
- Being able to be seen ASAP
- Location (being able to get there)
- Discretion
- Awareness
- Support
- Knowing where to go
- Access to information
- Made to feel welcome
- Accessibility
- Polite and understanding
- Accurate information on keeping safe
- Leaflets/guidance
- Contraception
- Feeling comfortable
- Opening times
- Information being kept safe and private
- A good service and knowing what to do.
- Being discrete in case you don't want people to know

**What are your reason for not using sexual health services, if any?**

- Don't use them - usually go to the Doctors
- Don't know what they offer
- Don't know where they are
- Ones that are known aren't in a private place
- Stigma around sexual health
- Not private enough
- Not friendly
- I don't feel confident using them
- Don't know location
- Embarrassed
- Feel judged by professionals
- Knowing people who work there
- Being scared of what people think
- Age of the sexual health workers
- Worried in case you are made to feel uncomfortable/embarrassed
- They are sometimes busy or I'm not sure if they are going to judge

- Ashamed
- If I had to I wouldn't use it from this college because it is in front of everyone
- Somethings that get said they will tell your parents even if you have told them not to
- Feel embarrassed and the big sign above the door saying 'sexual health'
- Time restrictions
- More information given at school
- Don't like to use condoms they feel rubbish
- The one at college is too open and public
- Nerves
- Not knowing what to expect

**How do you think the service can be made better?**

- Promote it - where is it? Opening times?
- Private place
- More friendly
- More awareness of services
- Keep confidentiality
- In college the c-card system should be in a different place (more private)
- Welcoming
- Made to feel better, put at ease and more approachable
- I think people could be friendlier and make you feel more welcome and not undermine you.
- More advertising
- More knowledge and awareness could be spread to avoid embarrassment
- Removing stigma
- More information
- More options
- Younger people at the service
- More staffing
- Same sex staff when visiting
- Greater promotion
- Fear of the unknown
- Choice of seeing a male or female member of staff
- More confidential - not giving details over the desk
- The college service is in the middle of the canteen where everyone can see. It needs to be made more private.
- Placing them out of the way of everyone. Can feel like you are able to go without people knowing.
- A private room, not so many questions
- Make them more appealing to teenagers
- Discretion
- Do not put a massive sign about the door or perhaps change the name to something more user friendly
- Increase publicity
- Using social media
- Have information in nightclubs - free condoms/advice



- Do it online or through the post
- More services 24/7
- Better locations
- Walk-in services
- More private and out of the way so you feel more comfortable
- Faster results
- Getting results there and then and making sure that doctors or nurses can give you good advice when needed