



# “Let’s Talk Sex and Your Health”

Review of sexual health services for  
young people in South Tyneside

21<sup>st</sup> January - 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020

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## Young Healthwatch South Tyneside - who we are, what we do

Young Healthwatch South Tyneside sits within the broader work of Healthwatch South Tyneside, which is one of 151 local Healthwatch organisations across England launched in April 2013 to give users of health and social care services a powerful voice.

As set out in the Health and Social Care Act of 2012, Healthwatch South Tyneside has the following statutory activities:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local young people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local health and care services.
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved.
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their need for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known.
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services and shared with Healthwatch England.
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services.
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England.
- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations direct to the CQC); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues.
- Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively.

As an independent Community Interest Company (CIC), it is your dedicated consumer champion, working with users of local National Health Service (NHS) and social care services to hear about your experiences, identify any issues or problems and help generate improvements.

Healthwatch South Tyneside has the power to enter and view services; can influence how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB); and provide information, advice and support about local services.

It also produces reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered and can share information and recommendations to Healthwatch England (HWE) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## Context

Young Healthwatch is a group of young volunteers aged 16 -25 which aims to ensure the voices of other young people and the types of services they want and receive are meeting their needs, and also makes positive recommendations for change.

Late in 2018 the decision was made to close the well established Sexual Health Service for young people based in Stanhope Parade, South Shields, and relocate it to Palmers Community Hospital in Jarrow.

Following the relocation, Young Healthwatch wanted to find out if the newly located service was meeting the needs of the young people using it. YHST approached the Sexual Health Service to find out more about what the service delivered and formed a strong partnership to improve sexual health services for young people in South Tyneside.

## What we did

The Young Healthwatch volunteers conducted an initial visit and met with clinic staff when the clinic was not occupied with patients, to gain a better understanding of how the clinics operated, what young people could expect on arrival and what services were available to them.

The young volunteers gathered key information prior to their observation visit so they could make more comparable observations when carrying out the planned observations when patients were present.

The Young Healthwatch volunteers worked in partnership with the sexual health team, in particular outreach worker Dan Dobson, on putting together a questionnaire for young people aged 16 - 25 to give their views on current service provision, gaps in services and areas they would like to see improved, and to ensure young people were informed about both the campaign and about sexual health services that were available to them via our website.

The questionnaire was published on our website using Survey Monkey and shared with our partners and schools. We conducted a community drop-in at South Tyneside College and hard to reach community groups including, Bright Futures, Matrix, students at Harton Academy and Apna Ghar to ensure we had a variation of data from young people across South Tyneside that use the Sexual Health Service.

From 21<sup>st</sup> January - 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020 the Young Healthwatch Volunteer Co-ordinator and the Young Healthwatch volunteers carried out an announced partnership visit to Palmers Community Hospital in Jarrow, Cleadon Park Primary Care Centre and South Tyneside College.

The survey was also distributed via Survey Monkey, all schools, statutory services, the voluntary sector and targeted community groups listed below.

On arrival at Palmers Community Hospital we were met by Dan Dobson (Sexual Health Outreach Worker) and introduced to the rest of the staff team in the clinic. We were given a dedicated space within the waiting area where the Young Healthwatch volunteers could approach patients privately and independently during their visit.

### **Observation from service introduction visit**

Compared to their initial visit it was noted by the volunteers that the clinic looked more welcoming, cleaner, the area had been painted and a participation wall erected in an area of the waiting room to offer more privacy.

## Summary of our findings

Total number of responses: 165

Age range, 13 - 25 years old

100 young people were aged between 17 and 25

54 young people aged between 13 and 16

These are broken down below:

Service	Number of responses
Sexual Health drop-ins	54
South Tyneside College	28
Survey Monkey	39
Bright Futures	17
Harton Academy	12
Apna Ghar	9
Matrix	5

From the services visited we had the most engagement from the sexual health clinics and South Tyneside College. It was felt this was due to us having a visual presence in areas where people could freely come and talk with us without being approached or embarrassed or not knowing where the information was going when collated.

### Male/female responses

141 of the 165 patients who took part were female, demonstrating women tend to talk about sexual health more than men. Some men stated they were often too embarrassed to talk about their sexual health.

### Common area of responses

111 of the respondents lived in the South Shields area; the other most common areas within South Tyneside were Jarrow and Hebburn. There were five responses recorded as visiting clinics out of area from Houghton le Spring, Newcastle and Sunderland. Other local areas included Boldon, Whitburn and Cleadon.

## Our responses from Knowledge and Information Questions

### **Do you know where to get sexual health information and advice?**

- 127 young people told us they knew where to get sexual health information from.
- Those that did not know where to get this information from were students in the college and anonymous respondents via Survey Monkey in the younger age range.

### **Who do you talk to if you need sexual health/advice information?**

- 127 of young people told us they spoke to a friend or relative if they needed sexual health advice.
- The remaining young people spoke with the sexual health service or their GP.
- There were six patients that spoke with their teacher or pharmacy.
- Some young people told us there needed to be more basic information about sexual health services and the practical things like the opening times at the types of services on offer rather than just sex education.

### **Do you know where to get free contraception from?**

- 116 respondents said they did know where to get this from.
- The remaining young people stated they did not know where to get these from. These were in the younger age range groups, community groups and the BAME community.

### **Do you know where to get emergency contraception from?**

- 125 young people stated they did know where to get this from and this feedback came from those already present at the sexual health clinic.
- The young people that did not know where to get this from were college students and from the community groups.

### **Where do you get contraception from?**

- The three main places young people accessed contraception from were the sexual health clinic, their GP and pharmacy.
- 10 young people stated they purchased this themselves from a shop as they were too embarrassed to attend the clinic, stating they were asked too many questions when attending.
- Some young people from the community groups we spoke to stated they got this information from their worker at the service.
- From the respondents we had from the BAME community, young people felt more comfortable visiting their GP.
- Young people stated “there should be more contraception available in the community” and “it should be made easier to access”.

### **Do you know where your local sexual health clinic is in South Tyneside and its opening times?**

- 93 young people stated yes.
- Those that stated they did know where the local clinic was were already at the clinic.
- The respondents that did not know where the clinic was were students, community groups and of younger age, who may be most in need of having this knowledge.

### **How easy or difficult is it to access sexual health services across south Tyneside?**

- Overall the service rated at fair/easy to access
- Some young people who did state access was difficult said this was because of location, feeling embarrassed, not enough drop-in clinics on offer and not enough information about services.

### **Do you think there should be a dedicated young person’s sexual health clinic?**

147 young people out of 165 in total agreed there should be a dedicated young person’s clinic.



Some young people said the following:

“This will make me feel more comfortable.”

“More drop-ins in the community or dedicated areas.”

“It’s not very comfortable when older people are sat next to me.”

### **How can the current service become more young person friendly?**

Here is what some young people said:

“Separate waiting rooms.”

“Drop-in services in colleges or community centres.”

“Promote buying condoms to young people.”

“Less informal.”

“More information about what is available at the clinic and online.”

“Break the stigma; young people feel scared and judged.”

“More inviting to young people.”

“Opening times should fit around school hours or more weekend clinics.”

“More clinics in different areas.”

“More online services and better information about it.”

“Better information and more outreach services.”

### **If a young person’s clinic was available where would you like it to be?**

- Young people told us they were happy for dedicated service to be between Palmers Community Hospital and Cleadon Park Primary Care Centre.
- Young people also stated they would like to see a clinic held in South Shields or in a community centre.

### **Do you think there is enough information about sexual health services already?**

- 95 young people told us there was enough information about services. This is just over half of the young people we spoke to, suggesting there are some areas in need of improvement.

**If you have used the sexual health service please tell us about your experience.**

Here is what some young people said:

“Staff are friendly and always welcoming.”

“Staff always make me feel comfortable.”

“It has always been good, I always feel looked after.”

“It was a good service but I had a long wait.”

“I left and came back because I had waited so long.”

“Brilliant - I took my daughter and the staff and clinic are fab!”

“Awkward, some were nice and some weren't.”

“I waited three weeks for a booked appointment.”

“Comfortable and welcoming.”

**Have you tried to use another health service before going to the sexual health service?**

- 97 young people stated they used the sexual health clinics.
- Other young people used their GP or pharmacy.
- Some young people used a worker they were linked to by a service such as Bright Futures or Matrix.
- BAME communities preferred to use their GP.

**Tell us why you choose this particular service?**

“It's closer to home.”

“I like the drop-in.”

“I am too embarrassed to talk to my parents or go to my doctor.”

“I feel more comfortable than talking to my GP.”

**Responses to service delivery questions**

**When accessing the service which type of appointment system do you prefer?**

- Overall patients preferred a mixture of both appointments and drop-in sessions and this was dependant on what they were receiving treatment for.
- I prefer the flexibility of both options.

- I wish there were more drop-in sessions available and you didn't wait so long to be seen.
- The appointments are good but they are never on time.
- There should be a drop-in centre in the community for young people, it would make people feel more comfortable.

### **How long have you waited to be seen?**

- 62 young people have waited over 60 minutes.
- 41 waited between 30 to 60 minutes.
- A further 62 waited under 30 minutes.
- During our observations two young people waited over 90 minutes for treatment.
- In one drop-in session the clinic was capped with an hour left of the clinic due to capacity. Four young people were turned away.

### **What are your current thoughts on the setup of the service e.g. warm and welcoming?**

- The service is warm and welcoming.
- The reception area could be more confidential; there are staff/patients from other services walking through the area.
- Staff are nice and welcoming.
- Cold and uncomfortable.
- Good service, more staff needed.
- Informative.

### **Have you found any barriers to accessing the sexual health service?**

Young people told us:

“Wait times are too long.”

“No walk in appointment available.”

“Uncomfortable with older people.”

“Not everyone is aware of the service and times.”

“There needs to more information.”

“The waiting room is uncomfortable with older people in it.”

### **How easy was it to talk about to staff about your sexual health concerns?**

- 139 stating it was easy/fair.
- 26 young people stated difficult/very difficult.

- Other patient comments were: more drop in times; more locations; more information about services in schools, colleges and other services; more services in the community for younger people.

**Do you feel your privacy and confidentiality was respected during your visit?**

- 145 felt it was respected.
- 16 stated they felt it was not.
- Comments made by patients were: they felt embarrassed; they felt the area was not confidential enough at the reception area.

**Would you recommend Palmers Community Hospital Sexual Health Service to someone you know?**

- Overall 140 of the 165 young people would recommend the service.
- 16 young people did not answer the question.
- Only nine young people said they would not recommend the service.

**How would you rate the South Tyneside Sexual Health Service?**

- 98 said very good/good.
- 53 rated it average/fair.
- 14 responded poor/very poor.

**Is there anything you can think of that may improve South Tyneside's sexual health clinic?**

The key things young people told us:

“A young person's clinic”; “more clinics”; “more information in schools”; “more privacy when booking in”; “less wait times”; “more practical advice for young people”; “hard to get to if you don't have bus fare”.

## Recommendations

Young Healthwatch would like to make the following recommendations of improvement to the South Tyneside Sexual Health Service based on what young people within South Tyneside told us:

- A dedicated young person clinic at Palmers Community Hospital and Cleadon Park.
- A warmer more welcoming confidential area.
- Consider offering later appointments and more drop-in services at the Palmers Community Hospital and Cleadon Park clinics.
- Consider increasing outreach sessions in the community.
- Review of wait times, to reduce the time a young person waits to prevent walk outs or non-engagement in the service.
- Increase awareness of the service across all communications and partnership pathways.
- More work to be done in schools and outreach to give more practical information about the sexual health services to help remove stigma.
- Improve access to information and barriers in pharmacies.
- Consider community locations to enable young people to access condoms, STI and general sexual health information easier.
- More outreach work needs to be done improving knowledge of the service and what is available with partners, schools and hard to reach groups in particular the BAME community.

It should be noted that as this work was completed post Covid-19 and this has led to a delay with producing this report.

The sexual health clinic is now running a telephone triage service. Dan Dobson and the sexual health team are working with Young Healthwatch to keep young people across South Tyneside up to date of the changes to services as they occur. Please visit our website for further information:

[healthwatchsouthtyneside/younghealthwatch.co.uk](https://healthwatchsouthtyneside/younghealthwatch.co.uk)

I would like to thank all of the Young Healthwatch volunteers for their hard work and commitment in raising awareness and influencing change for young people in South Tyneside and a big thank you to the Sexual Health Team for a great example of partnership working.

## Response from South Tyneside Sexual Health Service

An initial telephone consultation for all contacts with the service is now being offered.

For those service users needing to be seen in clinic, an agreed convenient and timely appointment slot is offered in a quiet and safe environment.

Appointments are offered in clinic on a daily basis with evening appointments offered on four days of the week. This has been a very positive approach and has removed the problems of busy and unpredictable drop in clinics resulting in lengthy waits or having to return at another time.

Confidentiality is also improved. Face to face appointments are now being offered in a Stanhope Parade Health Centre Clinic in South Shields for added convenience and a dedicated young person's clinic is being identified.

A comprehensive web-based service is available for online self-testing, advice and guidance. An online condom ordering and distribution service has been established.

A number of pharmacies are involved in the issue of emergency hormonal contraception, advice, sexual health screening and condom distribution. Pharmacists attend and receive relevant training with the Sexual Health Service and are well equipped to support across community locations.

Whilst the service has a well-established community offer working with partner agencies and services in education and workplace settings, Covid-19 and associated restrictions/changes has placed a greater reliance on digital communication whilst improving access to services. We have an active social media and internet presence with ongoing promotional and educational messages being shared.

We are pleased to be able to establish a digital evaluation survey aiming to gain valuable feedback from service users on the rapid changes we have made in our continuing response to the COVID pandemic and informing areas of future improvement for consideration.

Below is the list of partners via outreach covering a wide range of South Tyneside Sexual Health Services available for young people. We do advise calling ahead to check store availability as response to COVID/social distancing guidance

Many sites still have strict restrictions in place such as a one in, one out policy and attendance by appointment only.

To support any young people unable to access/travel we introduced the online platforms to support/improve inequalities (remote access). All services in South Tyneside receive communications from the Sexual Health Service advising of new initiatives and also as and when changes to provision occur as a response to COVID.

Communications are sent to all pharmacies, South Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (GPs), colleges, schools and young people services to update.

## **Outreach sites**

### **Pharmacies**

- Cohens Chemist, Boldon
- Boustead's Pharmacy, Jarrow
- Asda Pharmacy, Boldon
- Biddick Hall Pharmacy
- Metro Pharmacy
- Whiteleas Pharmacy
- DG Neil Pharmacy, Fellgate
- Carters
- Boots, Hebburn
- Hogg Chemist
- Boots, South Shields
- Edinburgh Road, Jarrow
- Darlings Pharmacy, Chichester
- Dinnings Pharmacy

## **GPs**

- Farnham Medical Practice
- The Glenn Primary Care Centre
- Victoria Medical Centre
- Marsden Road Health Centre
- Talbot Medical Centre
- Trinity Medical Practice
- Colliery Court Medical Practice
- Albert Road Surgery
- Dr Thornily Walker & Partners

## **Substance Misuse Services**

- Humankind Harm Reduction Services 18+
- Matrix Young People's Drugs and Alcohol Services

## **LGBT Services**

- Humankind

## **Young People Homelessness/Housing Services**

- Key Project

## **Hospital Services**

Community midwives

## **Remote Services**

Digital online platforms. Visit: [southtynesidesexualhealth.nhs.uk](https://southtynesidesexualhealth.nhs.uk)



## Contact details

Healthwatch South Tyneside  
Hebburn Central  
Glen Street  
Hebburn  
NE31 1AB

T: 0191 4897952  
E: [info@healthwatchsouthtyneside.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsouthtyneside.co.uk)  
W: [www.healthwatchsouthtyneside.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsouthtyneside.co.uk)  
Tw: @HWSouthTyneside  
Fb: facebook.com/HWSouthTyneside

South Tyneside Healthwatch CIC Company No: 1008398