

Review by Young People of Swindon's Sexual Health Service & British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

My Voice Matters

Hearing the voices of Young People from New College, Swindon

My Voice Matters is ensuring the voice of people with diverse lived experiences and backgrounds are heard.

We are proud to be able to give the opportunity for seldom heard voices to be heard by providers and wider organisations in their own words.

This report is based on the feedback of five New College Health and Social Care students who carried out a block placement with us.

Thank you to Petra, Sophie, Cosi, Alexis and Summer for your contribution!

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Background

We have supported the Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's Sexual Health Service based at the Swindon Health Centre and the Swindon office of the British Pregnancy Advice Service (BPAS) who are the local abortion service in gathering the views of Young People about their services.

The project was proposed and facilitated by Caroline McAleese of the Swindon Borough Council Public Health Team.

The questionnaire for the young people to complete was pulled together by Caroline and the Sexual Health Teams to capture the young people's observations and by asking questions at both sites.

It was based on the ['You're Welcome': establishing youth-friendly health and care services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/frameworks/health-and-social-care/youre-welcome-establishing-youth-friendly-health-and-care-services) framework.

What did we do?

The students were provided with Enter and View training by Healthwatch Swindon as part of a block placement, to ensure they understood how to visit and make observations on site. The importance of confidentiality was also impressed upon them. Enter and View training is provided to all volunteers at Healthwatch who go into NHS sites to observe them from a patient's viewpoint.

This project gave the opportunity for young people to input into shaping the services.

BPAS closed the service to clients when we visited to allow us full access to the site and staff. We had a tour of services and spoke to the Unit Manager, midwives (including the senior midwife) and the receptionist.

At the Swindon Sexual Health Service, we met the team including a consultant, Nurses and receptionist. We had a tour of facilities including the testing laboratory.

The students assessed the services based on the questionnaire provided and their own observations.

The students were measuring the services against 8 Criteria laid out in the 'You're welcomed' guidance which are:

1. Involving young people that the services should be meeting in relation to their care and in the design, delivery and review of services.

2. Explaining confidentiality and consent
3. Making young people welcome
4. Providing high-quality health, wellbeing and care services
5. Developing digital approaches
6. Staff skills and training
7. Linking to other services
8. Supporting young people's changing needs

What did we find?

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) Swindon

Visit date 1st May 2024

The initial impression from the students was the location was hidden away but there was a lot of rubbish near the office but was not directly in front of their space. There was small sign saying BPAS and a buzzer to gain entry. They felt the space felt discrete and safe.

BPAS Swindon provides:

- Abortion treatment and care
- Emergency contraception
- STI testing
- Pregnancy testing

[Abortion clinics, Information, Advice and Treatment | BPAS](#)

We asked a series of questions:

How could the leaflets about the services be improved?

- The BPAS leaflets available at the clinic were clear and gave detailed information around everything you would need to know. It was felt there were no improvements needed. No leaflet advertising the service was shown to the Young People so was not reviewed.
- “Very good and informational”
- “They don’t have a leaflet about the services, they had different ones for different things that includes a lot of information”

Is the reception area welcoming?

- “Yes, very friendly and asked if you would like any drinks”
- “The welcome was very friendly and very very safe secure and private”
- “Very welcoming, making me feel safe and comfortable”
- “Yes. They asked if I would like a drink, tea, coffee etc”
- “Had comfy seats and a coffee area, there was music I would listen to on the radio”
- “Did not have to sit and look at each other”
- “The young person’s corner was very good and had useful information”

How would you like to access the service – e.g., WhatsApp/messenger/phone/email?

- “Online form”
- “All of them”
- “Phone/email”
- “email”

How accessible are the services in particular for LGBTQIA+ young people?

- “They don’t see a lot of LGBTQIA+ people; however, if trans people need a cervical scan they do it for them and help as testosterone can make the skin tighter”
- “Trans people were helped and can receive counselling”

- “Transgender people have access to counselling”
- “Don’t see a lot of this group of people, they struggle to engage”

How accessible are the services in particular for disabled or neurodivergent young people?

- “No lifts but all on the ground floor”
- “Access for mental capacity, if drunk or on drugs will be refused treatment and told to go back”
- “Speak to individuals support workers”
- “Individuals who have no/little mental capacity needs more resources”
- “Access for mental capacity to understand capacity”
- “No lifts but only one floor”
- “Neurodivergent people are normally on the top of the list (for appointment times) or at the bottom if they make it know” This is so they can visit when it is less busy.
- “Some neurodivergent people have to visit more than once or keep cancelling due to a fear of the unknown, they said that was fine and they support them”
- “If people look unsure, they will send them away to think about it and suggest they talk to a counsellor”
- “Oliver McGowan Trained”
- “Have to access for mental capacity part of the safeguarding process”
- “ADHD/Autism people often come in then leave and come back.”

How accessible are the services in particular for young people with English as an additional language?

- “They have a translation system; they check they are pro-choice beforehand” (this in relation to the translator)”
- “Very good they have an interpreting service to help that individual”
- “They use the big words an interpretation centre to help clients and clinicians to understand”
- “They have a translation system; the translator must be pro-choice”
- “Family member or whoever accompanies the person involved is not allowed to translate to ensure that what is being repeated is what the

staff member has said, there is a risk otherwise of misunderstandings or the wrong information given"

- "Use a translation service called Big Word, have to be clear to the translator to make sure they are comfortable need to ensure they do not twist words"

How accessible are the services in particular for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds?

- "Often White British people, probably because of religious reasons but open to everyone"
- "Accessible same process but making sure they understand"
- "The same as anyone else, they are able to go through the same process - the big word - under 18s will need to be accompanied"
- "White British people mainly - they are open to everyone, but they may have to pay for treatment if not entitled"

How would you like to be supported around your sexual health at College?

- "More information on what's available"
- "More information on non-surgical abortion methods"
- "By having more information and making it less taboo subject"
- "Want abortion and options to be talked about more"
- "Need more information, did not know about the tablet until today thought it was all medical"

Do the services you have visited feel friendly and welcoming to you as a young person? How could this be improved?

- "I felt it was very accepting of women's decisions and make sure they are safe and happy"
- "Yes, very friendly"
- "Yes very, there seems to be no judgement with any age who would come into the clinic"
- "Yes, very friendly answered all the questions I asked with no awkwardness"
- "If under 16 need an adult there will need to do a safeguarding check"

- “Like that the majority of staff are women”

How could the websites be improved?

- “It was OK”

What other digital ideas do you have?

- “I don’t think anything else needs to be bought onto social media”
- “Social media, posters outside, spokespeople in town or busy places”

Where else would you like to access Sexual Health Services?

- “College”
- “Places of where everyone goes in general”
- “Colleges, schools”

Additional comments/ questions from the students answered by staff

- What support do homeless people get? “Support homeless people and try and them sheltered accommodation as could not have non-surgical without somewhere safe to stay”
- Can women come from other countries? “Can get an abortion in the UK but getting aftercare back in their country can be hard”
- How do the scans work? “Choice is the persons if they want to see and know the information, never tell them the gender or if multiples, offered images if they want them”
- What happens if you need surgery? “Have to go to Reading (not general anaesthetic) London, Cardiff or Bournemouth. Most go to Bournemouth can get funding for the travel if needed, they must have someone with them.
- Where do people come from? “They come from Swindon, Wiltshire, Bath, Frome and the surrounding areas. Lots come from Bath”
- Do you offer support to people who use the service? “Counselling is offered but do not have to have if do not want to”
- Do you get some people come in regularly? “Yes, we do get some women that come in regularly.”

- How many times can you use the service? “There are no frequency restrictions (If you need us, we will see you)”
- What happens if you get someone coming back more than once? “Women who come back regularly are flagged, so we can ensure there are no safeguarding concerns. We would discuss contraception (As we would with anyone) but maybe re-word to try and get understanding of why they are declining contraception. Or if they are already on contraception, for example the pill, have a discussion around their lifestyle, as they may just have a really hectic schedule and not taking the pill perfectly. Therefore, they may want to consider a LARC (Long-acting reversible contraception) like a coil or implant.”

Swindon Sexual Health Services

Visit 2nd May 2024

The Swindon Sexual Health Clinic is based on the second floor of Swindon Health Centre in the town centre. The building is very busy and has two lifts that are easily accessible. One is larger and is able to easily accommodate wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Swindon Sexual Health Services are a free confidential service who see people of all ages:

They offer:

- Testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Testing and treatment for HIV
- Where indicated vaccinations for Hepatitis B, A and Human Papilloma virus (HPV)
- Pre and post exposure prophylaxis against HIV (PEP and PREP)
- Contraception
- Pregnancy testing and advice
- Emergency contraception

They are open Monday to Saturday and offer walk-in clinics at a different time of the day.

How could the leaflets about the service be improved?

The credit card size leaflet was good it gave a quick overview of the information and you could put it in your pocket.

The leaflet that was sent to review looked dated and needed to look more like the credit card sized one.

The larger leaflet feedback was

- "What help is offered it is not clear"
- "Make it more inviting to read"
- "Imply it's for all ages, this is not clear"
- "Add a contact email"
- "Specify what contraception is on offer"
- "Say what times you are open"
- "More pictures"
- "Say how they can get to the clinic"
- "More colour, more specific detail including days and times"
- "Explain how you can have the home testing kits"
- "Have leaflets about the condom service and home testing at College along with the general leaflet"
- "The leaflets are informational but hard to understand not aimed at young people"
- "Need more fun leaflets"
- "Need a leaflet promoting PREP and PEP"
- "Maybe make all leaflets suitable for all ages or have one for young people, make them more exciting and inviting to read"
- "Needs more colour and to be more specific"

Is the reception area welcoming?

- "Kind and welcoming also quiet when we visited so peaceful, smiley friendly faces"
- "It could do with more plants, colour, music, posters and reading material"
- "Move the seats so you are not staring at each other, maybe put them in rows"
- "Have a young person's board showing what's on offer"

- “Play music that young people like”
- “Have a water machine so you can get a drink”
- “Need posters with young people and different races up”
- “Needs brighter colours”
- “It felt weird and dull”
- “Needs a private space you can sit in, if you do not want to be seen”
- “Needs music on that is less quiet”
- “Would like a coffee stand like BPAS”
- “It felt more medical than I expected”
- “I would not like sitting there”
- “It felt private and secure”
- “Yes very welcoming - but the environment could be made softer”
- “It was welcoming and calm, but a bit dull, needs more colour, flowers/plants music and seats moved”

How would you like to access the services – e.g. WhatsApp/messenger/phone/email?

- “Do not want WhatsApp that is too personal, you can see our profile pictures and see our updates, would prefer text messages, do not like talking to people on the phone” (this was the view of all the Young People)
- “Email, messages, letters to home potentially”
- “Email, messenger or by walking in”
- “Rather have an email”
- “Want physical booklets to look at”
- “All the above except Whatapp”
- “They can text on work phones if people feel comfortable with it like that, can also email or call if people prefer that”
- “WhatsApp and message is assessable for deaf people or hard of hearing. I would like a message or call”

How accessible are the services in particular for LGBTQIA+ young people?

- “They wear rainbow lanyards so show they are supporters”

- “They go to PRIDE every year and test people”
- “They have an option for Transgender on the fill out form”
- “Do PRIDE every year”
- “Wear a rainbow lanyard”
- “Have transgender and other on their fill out forms”
- “Need posters representing them up in reception”
- “PEP and PREP are dispensed here but does not feel like they are champions except for the lanyards, needs more ally signs”
- “Talked to young people at Out of the Can, they are only a small part of the community need to talk to more young people”
- “PRIDE is great but only once a year”
- “Have you told the community about the free condoms?”
- “ They do PRIDE every year and hand out insight kits, do health promotions and PREP promotions”
- “Very accessible attend PRIDE every year, used to do testing and health promotion need more of that”
- “Need posters on the wall about them to make them feel comfortable and welcomed”

How accessible are the services in particular for disabled or neurodivergent young people?

- “There is a lift as well as stairs, so people in wheelchairs can reach where they need to go”
- “There is a ramp to get into the building”
- “If neurodiverse can book an appointment so do not have to sit and wait”
- “Walk in sounds like it could be difficult for neurodiverse people if it’s really busy, need to think about how to support them”
- “The waiting room is not very welcoming to neurodiverse people nothing for them to focus on”
- “They have a ramp out front and a lift which has braille buttons.
- “Neurodiverse people are offered the option to book appointments when less busy”
- “Do not mind if Neurodiverse people keep going in and out”
- “Try to book Neurodiverse people in at the beginning or end of day, but how do you know they are?”

- "Have access to LD lead staff"
- "If deaf use email and texting to communicate"
- "Access to GWH support for sign language"
- "Neurodivergent is a work in progress off booked appointments"
- "Can dim the lights in the clinic rooms if it is too bright, are people aware of this, how do they tell you they need it?"
- "Working on clinic videos, need them to explain what you do and what to expect"
- "Working on easy read but not available at the moment"
- "They have light dimmers, sign language available and lift ramps"
- "There is Braille in the lift, offer booked appointments to avoid being in crowded space"
- "Need videos to explain the process"

How accessible are the services in particular for young people with English as an additional language?

- "They mentioned that have someone who can translate if they speak a different language"
- "They offer sign language"
- "Has translators, no posters or anything up in other languages, no leaflets in the waiting room in other languages"
- "Offer refugee talks"
- "Work with refugees"
- "Just as assessable as to everyone else they have an interpreting service for people who do not speak English"

How accessible are the services in particular for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds?

- "They accommodate language barriers"
- "Diverse client group"
- "Language interpreter available on the phone to translate word for word"

- “Offer 60 different languages for translation hugely diverse”
- “Said not all parts of the community access the service, why is this? What can be done?”
- “Not representative of black or Hispanic males need to be more proactive about representing the community”
- “The service is open to anyone 13+ so any person can access the clinic”

How would you like to be supported around your sexual health at college?

- “Educate more young people”
- “Have leaflets, booklets, maybe even videos”
- “Do not want testing at College that needs to be kept separate”
- “If you have a stand at College do not put a sexual health banner up, no one will come they will be too embarrassed, call it something else”
- “Make us more aware of contraception’s available”
- “Offer advice on how you can deal with an STI”
- “Posters on the back of the toilet doors”
- Posters/leaflets with the school nurse”
- “Would NOT want testing at college”
- “Do not put condoms in the toilets at College some idiots will make holes in them with a pin, maybe give them to the College nurse to handout”
- “It would be good if young men could pick up the condoms at college discreetly rather than come into the clinic which is a step too far for most or post them, you need to take the service to where the young people are”
- “Could hand out home tests at College”
- “Need more information at College with location and number of clinics”
- “Make it more spoken about so that there is not a stigma creating more awareness”
- “More leaflets and posters around College- wellbeing and safeguarding area, reception and display boards”

Do the services you have visited feel friendly and welcoming to you as a young person?

- “The staff were very friendly, talkative, answered whatever questions we asked”
- “How can this be improved – they can add more leaflets and things for education etc”
- “Yes, the staff were lovely”
- “Felt safe and secure, but maybe some music so it feels less clinical”
- “Yes very welcoming, feels like a judgement free zone.”
- “The staff are very welcoming and understanding, feels not judgemental towards young people with free condoms and free emergency contraception, don’t have to ask staff for condoms can do it through a QR code”

How could the websites be improved?

Looked at two websites.

The GWH hosted site [Sexual Health | Great Western Hospital \(gwh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gwh.nhs.uk/sexual-health)

- “It needs to just tell you how to make an appointment instead of giving you a number to call”
- “Maybe talk/explain a bit more about what sexual health is”
- “Talk a bit more about the services they treat/test for”
- “Needs more links to information”
- “Not enough information, need more information – less saying about websites”

The second website was [Swindon Sexual Health | Great Western Hospitals NHS](https://www.swindon.nhs.uk/sexual-health)

- “It is easy to use because it is sectioned off, each tab has its own information”
- “Gives you information on what times they’re open and when you can walk in”
- “Tells you what they offer; contraception, free condoms, emergency contraception etc”
- “New condom scheme app; need more information about the app, the QR codes on the website, what it does or allow you to sign up on the website”
- “Add more videos for someone who’s never been before it might calm their nerves”
- “Add items to the website to do with LGBTQIA+ it may make them feel safe”

- “Make it more interactive – link to App to order condoms”
- “I like the categories, it needs bright and short videos like YouTube”

What other digital ideas do you have – e.g. – apps, social media etc?

- “Use Social media”
- “Have spokespeople in town advertising”
- “I would rather not speak to a person, QR codes, all online, I do not want to be identifiable”
- “Make videos about the service and make it easy to use”
- “Maybe the NHS could make the more known or bring more awareness to social media”

Where would you like to access Sexual Health Services? E.g. college or other settings?

- “Town Centre”
- “Through Youth workers”
- “Give more information at colleges and schools”
- “Need to do assemblies at secondary school”
- “Maybe take the service to younger people”

What other comments do you have?

- “The medicines were kept neat and tidy and locked away in the Lab”
- “Like the hatch in the toilet where you could directly pass the sample to the lab made it quick and easy”
- “The condom ordering service is great but young men will be too embarrassed to come and collect them, could they pick them up from college or have them delivered?”
- “The clinic rooms were good and had an engaged sign so you could not walk in by mistake”
- “The whole clinic was more medical than I expected, I did not expect a Laboratory and onsite testing, it was interesting to see how it was done”
- “It felt better to come in rather than doing the testing at home, I would be worried that I would do it wrong at home”

- “Coming in rather than home testing makes me feel safer as it feels like you know what you are doing and I would not have any idea”
- “Need to make sure Youth Workers know about how to get Condoms, maybe give them packages to hand out”
- “We have learnt about consent in school but never about sexual health and nothing about emergency contraception”
- “In Year 11 we had a one hour lesson on how to put a condom on but that is it for sexual health”

Key findings against the 8 criteria

Did the service meet the 8 criteria? If so, how and if not, what could be improved?

‘You’re welcomed’ guidance which are:

1. Involving young people that the services should be meeting in relation to their care and in the design, delivery and review of services.

This criteria was met, however the young people did ask how this engagement will be continued and not a one off

“As a young person I was explained the process very well and understood what was happening. Staff were very kind and friendly. Provide a very good level of training know the correct terminology.”

“They cared about our opinions and wanted to hear what we have to say”

“They wanted our honest opinions.”

2. Explaining confidentiality and consent

This was explained clearly at both sites and all the criteria was met in the view of the Young people

“The confidentiality was great at the Sexual Health Clinic, having a separate record to the GP one made me feel like it would be safer for me to use the service”

“The testing was completely confidential when in the laboratory you could not see the name of the person just a number”

3. Making young people welcome

The students visiting were made to feel very welcomed which they appreciated.

At BPAS the space was very calm and welcoming. The view at the Sexual Health Clinic was more mixed about the waiting space. It was felt it could benefit from a softening of the space and the chairs moving to not be facing each other.

“The staff had a good level of understanding and cater to young peoples needs, they explained the services really well to us”

4. Providing high-quality health, wellbeing and care services

All the students agreed that both sites provided in their view a great standard of care.

BPAS talked about the emotional and mental wellbeing of the service user but this was not mentioned at the Sexual Health clinic, this was observed by the Young People.

5. Developing digital approaches

There are some gaps in the digital approaches that were observed by the young people their suggestions include more videos explaining and promoting the services.

“They wanted our honest opinions on how to improve their website so it can target younger people”

6. Staff skills and training

It was clear the staff were highly trained in their field. The BPAS staff mentioned they had undergone the Oliver McGowan Autism Training, this was not mentioned by the Sexual Health Clinic Staff.

“There was no mention of the wellbeing or mental health of the service users at the Sexual Health Clinic”

“Counselling is offered to everyone who uses BPAS”

7. Linking to other services

There was little mention of linking to other services although the Sexual Health clinic did discuss offering support to Youth Workers.

“Visited Out of the Can and go to PRIDE”

8. Supporting young people's changing needs

The students felt that the majority of their needs were being met, there were some discussions around where to get information particularly at College and how to communicate with Young People.

Healthwatch Swindon's comments

The students found the experience to be eye opening and beneficial. Overall they found the services to be welcoming and non judgmental which was key to them.

Two students expressed the view that the BPAS unit was somewhere they could see themselves working in the future.

The view of the students was that the units are trying to support Young People and were meeting the majority of the 8 criteria they were assessing against.

They welcomed the opportunity to see the services and would hope that they continue to engage with Young People to ensure their voice is heard. Healthwatch is happy to support in this.



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