

Setting New Sex-Spectations

A focused look into Sexual Health Services
in Hull

Healthwatch Hull – Hull and East Riding Sexual Health Network

Introduction

Healthwatch Hull began working in collaboration with Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire, Yorkshire MESMAC, CHCP, Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust and Public Health in October 2024 to provide valuable feedback surrounding what service users feel about information surrounding sexual health in Hull.

This group was created to inform local services about how people in Hull are receiving their information on Sexual Health, the overall aim was to work out how best to communicate with the local population to ensure that as many people as possible were receiving accurate and helpful sexual health information. Healthwatch Hull was brought in as an engagement tool to access and pass on this information from an independent stance.

The feedback we were gathering tended to be more focused within the young people of the city. We attended several engagements with many of the stakeholders, in order to create a wide scope of feedback. We attended sessions such as:

- ***Mesmac's weekly 'Young People's Contraception Clinic'***
- ***Mesmac's Weekly sexual health drop in's (Wilberforce College and Wyke College)***
- ***Conifer House's Walk-in clinic for General Contraception and STI services***

These sessions allowed us to speak to several people accessing Sexual Health assistance and advice, Contraceptive assistance and advice and Health and Relationship Advice.

Over a period of 4 weeks, Healthwatch Hull spoke to:

- **14** – Across colleges
- **5** – Across MESMAC drop ins
- **2** – Across Conifer House Drop ins

This was an extremely beneficial and interesting for us as a Healthwatch to get involved in an aspect of Healthcare in Hull we don't often receive information about. We look forward to making these engagements a regular occurrence in the new year, as it will not only allow us to continue to grow this base of information, it will also allow us to remain involved in this aspect of healthcare as it grows and changes.

We believe it is very important and beneficial to maintain this contact, particularly with the young people that access these services, to ensure that those who are about to start a potentially life-long engagement with the services, have a say in how those services are shaped, and understand that their voices are so important to the functioning of these services.

Services

MESMAC

Yorkshire MESMAC is one of the oldest and largest sexual health organisations in the country. They offer services to various communities across Yorkshire, including men who have sex with men, people of colour and other marginalised races, people misusing drugs, sex workers and LGBT+ young people and adults. They offer a range of mental health and wellbeing services, including counselling, 1-2-1 support, group sessions and training.

We attended three available drop in's put on by MESMAC, their weekly young person's sexual health drop in's, their weekly college drop ins and their weekly drop in at Kenworthy House.

Conifer House

Conifer Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Services is a progressive and innovative service provided by City Health Care Partnership CIC, where Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) and Family Planning, Community Gynaecology, Social Services, non-statutory services and voluntary services work together to offer a holistic service in Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Hull and East Riding have integrated their sexual and

reproductive health services to ensure that service users receive the best care, advice and treatment wherever possible.

We attended the Conifer House's weekly walk-in clinic for General Contraception and STI services.

Feedback

Wyke College weekly sexual health drop in Feedback:

'They happen in big assemblies, there's no opportunity to ask private anonymous questions'

'We only really learn about STD's and Contraception'

'We don't learn much about nonnormative (LGBTQIA) relationships, more variety would be appreciated'

'It's quite good, they're always letting us know when the condom guy is going to be here'

'An anonymous question system would be good at the end of the sessions, maybe to be answered in the next session'

'I feel like they cover a lot of things'

'It could be slightly better, we did it once last year, it could be more LGBTQIA friendly. I'd like to hear more about periods, there's a big presumption that we know enough about it already, but it would be good if the boys could have more focus on it. Some came up to college from high schools where boys didn't have to know about it, so they still don't now'

'I feel like there isn't enough time to cover everything'

'We'd like more information on STD's'

'It's the same topic every year, there's lots of focus on consent, which is good, but more variety would be good'

'There's a long time in between sessions'

'Women's health, menstrual and reproductive health isn't really covered (endometriosis mentioned)'

'We get the HPV vaccine, but we don't really know what for'

'They happen in pastoral lessons once a half term college wise, Mesmac comes in to do sessions. It's a laugh watching first years learn about it all. It gets quite repetitive within college, there's loads of emphasis on consent etc but it feels quite repetitive'

Conifer House Walk-in clinic for General Contraception and STI services Feedback

'23yo patient - I came for contraception today, I was told previously about the drop in. This is ideal, because I live nearby so I can just pop in. This doesn't faze me, as long as I'm getting what I need. The staff are always really polite and helpful. They get all my answers for me.'

'15yo patient - brought in by mum today. Patient and mum knew about drop in from previous visits and friends. They commented that they may prefer a drop in closer to Bransholme as that is where they live. They both said they would prefer a non-clinical setting for initial conversations but a clinical setting for the administering of the contraception. They both found the drop in accessible but wished there was something closer. All the staff have been great, always really friendly and helpful.'

Mesmac – Monday Young People's Contraceptive Drop in Feedback

*'17yo - I've been coming for a few weeks now; I attend for the relationship side of their service. The help and support I receive from here is fantastic, *** is nice, she listens, and you don't feel daft.'*

'19yo - third time coming, I come for contraception, I've been coming for 4 years. I learnt about this through college they did an assembly, so you knew where to come to. It's lovely here, very chilled out and comfy compared to a GP, feels less clinical and scary, I prefer it being informal.'

Professional but comfortable. I think online booking would be beneficial. The staff are absolute angels.'

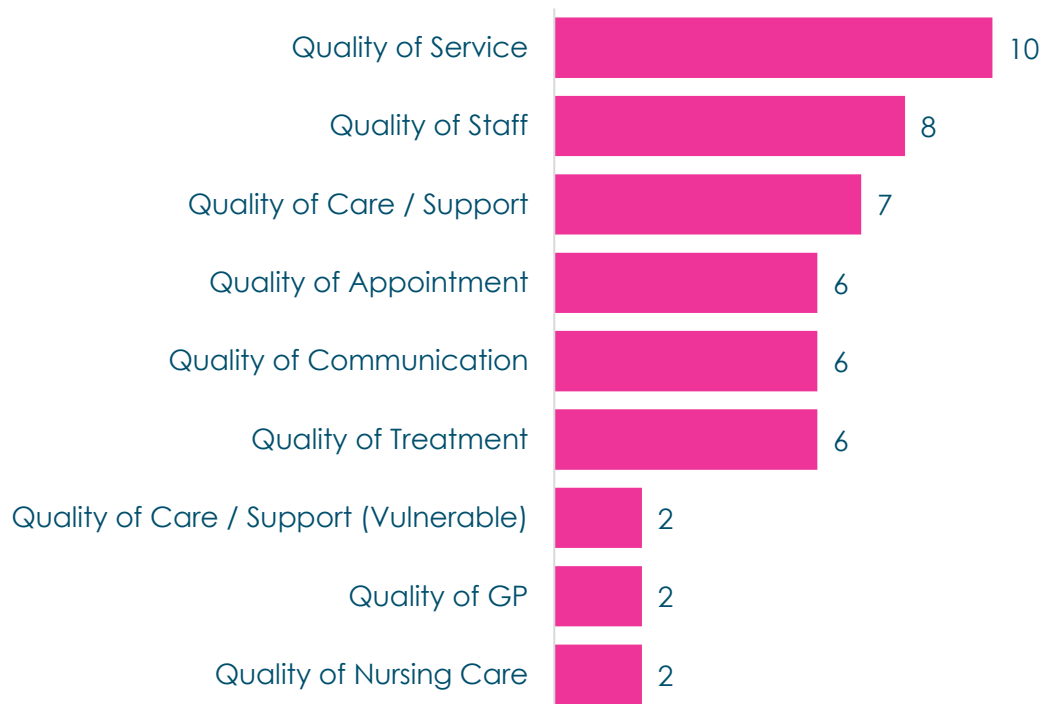
'18yo - I've been coming for just over a year. I come for contraceptive, I was referred by the Boulevard centre and I learnt about it at college. It's good here the staff are all really good.'

*'19yo - I've been coming for 2 years now. I realised I needed to be on contraception, I called here after a friend told me about it. This is so much easier than attending my GP, there's not as much waiting around here. The contraceptive injection didn't agree with me, they explained all my options really well and were so supportive and lovely. It was completely confidential, so it gives you the autonomy that you don't really get elsewhere. When I went to the GP before, I almost felt s**t shamed but here it's so comfortable and easy. The ring me up when I'm due for an update on my contraception so I don't even have to remember that it just makes life so much easier.'*

16yo patient - I've been coming for three years now; I used to come for support now I come for contraceptive care and let's talk services. They're really good when you just need somebody to talk to but I'm here today for STI tests. I find it fine; they just make it feel normal and safe. The staff are ace, they feel like mates at this point they are really supportive. They've called the doctors and police on my behalf before when I've had instances of sexual assault. They're fantastic.'

Data

Sexual Health Services - Compliments



Sexual Health Services - Intelligence



The data we collected demonstrates the specific areas where service users feel the Sexual Health Services in Hull could improve. The areas pointed out most often were the 'Information, publicity and advice' and

‘The communication between Service and Service User’. This is in specific reference to the college students we spoke to, as they communicated to us that the information they receive at college regarding sexual education was quite repetitive and focused mainly on heteronormative relationships. They acknowledged that there were items such as consent, STD’s and safe sex that absolutely have to be covered, but they reported that they wanted to learn more about other topics, particularly women’s health, including topics such as menstruation (to all students, not just girls), endometriosis and HPV information.

The Service Users we spoke to reported that they were very happy with the Quality of Staff and Quality of Service. The team at MESMAC were particularly highlighted as an overwhelmingly positive aspect of Sexual Health Care in Hull, it was suggested by the service users that this is because they are so readily available practically all the time should they be required. People reported to Healthwatch that they enjoyed the non-clinical approach of MESMAC, it feels very approachable, comfortable and free of judgement that is sometimes carried in more clinical settings. This leads to service users to express themselves and their concerns freely, which in turn means they can access the services they need.

Conclusion

To conclude, there are areas in Sexual Health Systems, both clinical and non-clinical, in Hull that work really well, and they provide much needed support to service users in Hull.

There are benefits to both forms of service in Hull. The Service Users we spoke to in clinical settings in Hull reported that they appreciated knowing exactly where to come for certain areas of sexual health such as contraceptive administration. The service users making use of the non-clinical aspects of Sexual Health services in Hull reported that they preferred the more laid-back approach to receiving advice on their sexual health choices as it relieves the pressures of feeling potential judgement from those in more clinical sectors of sexual health care. There are of course areas that could do with some improvements and there are a number of young people in colleges around Hull that want to be actively

involved in what they are being taught and want a say in how services that benefit them are being rolled out.