

healthy respect



Special
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Supplement
2003

Let's talk about sex . . . and relationships !

If you are a youth worker reading this article and the thought of a young person talking to you about sex fills you with dread - read on to find out what role you could play in improving young people's sexual health. Research carried out by Healthy Respect shows that young people do want to talk about sex and relationships with an adult they can trust. Parents, teachers, nurses and youth workers are all people that young people identified as someone they could talk to.

A listening ear

Many young people see youth workers as someone they can talk to who won't judge them or their behaviour, but will listen carefully to what they have to say. This was highlighted in recent research when young people said they preferred to talk to youth workers than many other professionals. One of the strengths of working in an informal education setting, such as the local youth group, is that young people come along because they want to and this is often based upon the positive relationships they have with staff in the group.

Some youth workers may think that talking about sex and relationships is a job for parents and may not feel comfortable talking about these issues. What we have to remember is that whether you are a parent, teacher or youth worker - what you don't say about sex and relationships has as big an impact as what you do say! For example, if a young person wants to talk to you about sex and relationships and you appear unwilling, this sends out a strong message that it is not good to talk about these issues. It is important that we are able to be aware of our personal values in this area of work but not to let it affect our discussions with young people. Healthy Respect is trying to create a more open culture for everyone to feel able to talk about sex and relationships in a constructive and positive way.

Who you gonna call?

As we all know, youth workers are extremely resourceful and it is for this reason that young people may seek your support to find out about other services: they don't expect you to know it all yourself! If you have a particularly good relationship with a young person it may also be that they want you to accompany them to any service they decide to use. This can make first time use of specialist sexual health services much easier. You can also support young people by checking how they got on visiting a new service and providing a regular opportunity to talk things through.

One of the most important issues for young people is confidentiality, therefore, it is important that you and other staff and volunteers in your group are clear about

what your confidentiality policy is and then share this with young people, prior to any discussions about sexual health taking place. Healthy Respect has produced some draft guidance for youth workers in voluntary and community education provision and will be providing training early next year on this subject.

One of the things Healthy Respect has done, to make signposting to other services easier for young people and professionals, is to produce a contacts chart of all the specialist services young people can use. This is included in a booklet for young people called Safe 'n' Sorted. It is being given out to all third year pupils and can be ordered for use in your youth group from Lothian NHS Board and Library & Resource Centre (see over).



HELP IS AT HAND . . .

If you are keen to look at how your youth group can raise young people's awareness of sexual health and relationships issues, then help is at hand. Healthy Respect and Community Education are currently planning some training on sexual health issues for youth workers in Edinburgh. If successful, we hope this will also take place in other areas of Lothian. Alternatively, Lothian NHS Board provides free training events on sexual health-related issues. A copy of the programme can also be obtained from the Library and Resource Centre.

If you are interested in finding out more then contact Healthy Respect on 0131 536 9454 or your local Community Education office. If you feel fairly confident about responding to young people's queries but would like to develop some structured work around sexual health in your group, then visit the Healthy Respect website for some tips on how to plan sessions with young people. Go to www.healthy-respect.com and look under 'working with young people'. And if you also happen to be a parent or carer, why don't you do our parents' quiz on the website to see how good you are at talking about sexual health with the children you look after?

Healthy Respect can be contacted at:
 Telephone: 0131 536 9454
 Fax: 0131 536 9412
 Email:
healthy.respect@lhb.scot.nhs.uk

The Lothian Health Board Library and Resource Centre can be contacted at:
 Telephone: 0131 536 9451/2/3
 Fax: 0131 536 9426

LOTHIAN NHS BOARD LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTRE OPENING TIMES

Mon	1pm - 5pm
Tues-Wed	9am - 5pm
Thurs	9am - 6pm
Fri	9am - 1pm

ALL I WANT

A Review of Specialist Sexual Health Services for Young People

There have been an increasing number of health drop-in centres set up for young people throughout Lothian in recent years, based in the community, school, youth club or clinical setting. As part of the Healthy Respect's Young Person's Strategy, a Review of Specialist Sexual Health Services for Young People has been carried out across Lothian.

The main purpose of the review was to establish what young people thought of the specialist sexual health services currently available to them, how they could be improved or become more

young person friendly and what their ideal sexual health service would look like. However, it was also important to establish what service providers are, or think they are, providing. Healthy Respect commissioned The TASC Agency to carry out this study, which included 378 young people and 11 service providers.

Different methods were used to collate data including questionnaires, both online and self-completion, interviews and focus groups.

RESULTS OF THE REVIEW

What we know about young people

Half of the young people who took part in the study first accessed specialised or targeted sexual health services before their 16th birthday. Most of them found out about the service from a friend and 9% from a visitor to school. Services that are based locally or within less than 20 minutes travelling time are used more frequently with young people walking or using the bus.

Why young people use the service

Many of the young people asked about why they used a sexual health service provided several reasons but the majority stated it was for free condoms, advice and information, or contraception (23% the Pill/15% for emergency contraception). A further 15% attended because of worries about STIs and 14% for pregnancy tests.

When young people like a sexual health service

Young people identified a service they liked as providing confidentiality, anonymity, good advice and information from friendly, non-judgemental and supportive staff who are experienced and informed.

Recommendations

Young people are quite clear about what they want but this has to be balanced with what is available in reality. Suitable venues to deliver confidential sexual health services are difficult to find in the community. However, there are a few basic points to consider:

- Collate data, plan together and target services (work with health service providers).
- Try and provide a service that is open more than once a week and includes evenings or weekends.
- Include a card.
- Involve young people in the planning of sexual health services.
- Be clear, consistent and honest about confidentiality.
- Recognise territorialism.
- Inform and engage with young people, other service providers and local community groups (youth clubs etc).
- Keep up to date with other general and sexual health services and provide information about them.
- Agree and prepare policies in advance, e.g. child protection, confidentiality.
- Think about methods of monitoring and evaluation, especially for feeding back to key service providers and health care planners.
- Consider the needs of the local population, e.g. ethnic groups, cultural and religious differences, disabled access, young people friendly literature.

The full report, a summary version and a version for young people, will be available to download from www.healthy-respect.com from January 2004. Copies are available from Healthy Respect on 0131 536 9454 and will be widely distributed.

valid at:



to find your nearest
c:card point

www.ccard.org.uk

call free 0800 22 44 88



All about . . .

c:card

Lynda Christie, Healthy Respect's c:card Development Worker, based at the Harm Reduction Team, tells us about the eagerly awaited c:card re-brand.

Tell us a little bit about the history of c:card?

c:card began in 1989 as a public health response to the HIV epidemic in Lothian. Lothian Health Board decided that one of the best ways to prevent the escalation of HIV in the Region was by making free condoms more accessible to the general population. At that time, free condoms were only available through GPs, Family Planning clinics or The Brook Advisory Centre (now Caledonia Youth) and that was only if you had an appointment. So, it was actually quite difficult to go in and quickly and easily obtain free condoms.

One of the methods developed to encourage the pick-up of free condoms was to produce a card, like a credit card, which people could show at reception desks of Family Planning clinics and the Brook and pick up free condoms. That card was called a 'C Card'. Since then, c:card has developed into a network of 60 points across the whole of Lothian, providing free condoms as well as information and advice on sexual health and relationships.

c:card points can now be found within a variety of organisations in health settings (for instance, Caledonia Youth and local health centres), youth agencies (Citadel Youth Centre, Canongate Youth Project, The Youth Agency in Wester Hailes and many others), the voluntary sector (e.g. Edinburgh City Youth Café) and all colleges and universities in Edinburgh and Lothian. In each c:card point, we provide a walk-in service. At the first visit, registration takes place and a card is issued with a supply of free condoms. At each subsequent visit, the client shows the card to our trained staff to receive their next batch of condoms plus any advice or service they might require.

Why did such a successful scheme decide to change?

Fundamentally, we haven't changed. We're still providing free condoms to people in a wide range of access points. One of the things that we wanted to do was to re-define aspects of the service and take a critical look at what was working and what wasn't working so well.

As part of Healthy Respect, c:card commissioned a thorough evaluation of the service, involving people who used the service and people who worked for c:card. The result of the evaluation, which wasn't a great surprise to us, was that a number of aspects of the service needed improvement, particularly how the service was working for under 16s and LGBT people.

We have now developed 2 types of c:card service - c:card direct, specifically for people aged 16 and over; and c:card plus which, although it can be used by over-16s, provides a specialist service for people aged 13 - 15. At c:card plus, because of the age of the users, we take particular care to ensure that they are given a separate consultation and offered the opportunity to talk about their sexual health. Other sexual health services, such as pregnancy testing, are available, should our clients require them.

We are also dealing with the needs of under-13s who, although they cannot register and be given condoms, can come to us with any worries, receive advice or reassurance, and be referred to other agencies, such as their GP. A big commitment of c:card is to making our c:card points as user-friendly as we can for young people and the new staff training that happened around the re-brand took this into consideration.

We've also developed new c:card points in more LGBT-friendly agencies and re-addressed some of the attitudes and assumptions of c:card workers when working with LGBT people.

What are the main differences between the old service and the new one?

The most obvious difference is the look of c:card. We've spent a lot of time and energy on re-designing the cards themselves and all the accompanying leaflets people receive when using the service. We've developed a new website and produced packaging and merchandise. Everything that is c:card has been re-designed and re-vamped - and it's gorgeous! And because we know young people have high expectations about how things look, we hope it will help encourage use of the service itself.

Importantly, what we've also done is produce a new operating manual for c:card providers. In the past, all the information on policies and procedures was available to staff at c:card points but now it's been pulled together into a much more cohesive form. It goes into much greater detail and I think it hangs together in a way that it perhaps didn't before. And I know, because people have already told me, that it's a huge back-up for staff at c:card points. They are the people who are possibly dealing with sensitive situations and they need to know exactly where they - and the young people they are seeing on a daily basis - stand in relation to consent, child protection, and other legal issues. All of this is now clearly stated so that there are no grey areas.

What has your role been in all of this?

My role has been to manage the whole process of change. I've been liaising with graphic designers, the c:card team and c:card users, and Healthy Respect to move forward the whole process.

What have you learned from it?

I've learned so much, personally - it's been a massive learning experience.

One of the assets has been time to develop the re-brand so we've avoided rushing into it really quickly. We took enough time to make sure c:card providers had all the information, were aware of the changes and came with us. I've tried to ensure that they've been involved right throughout the process. It was really important to me that they were included and felt that things hadn't been done to them, but with them.

The same goes for c:card users. The original report consulted users and we've also consulted them on mock-ups of all the new materials and hope to keep them involved in future designs. And I think we're going to get really good feedback from it, certainly from the look of it. That's what people are picking up on so far - that it looks stunning and is very high quality.



What are you most proud of?

The quality of the product is really good and the whole consultation process and subsequent training package, I think, are things we can be proud of.

And finally . . .

We would be very keen, if people are using c:card, to hear feedback, because one of the things we've done is 'consult, consult, consult' throughout the process. What I really want to do now is look at the impact of the changes, what responses we are getting from people using the service and people providing the service, what's working and what needs changed or developed in another way.

To find a c:card point near you, call free 0800 22 44 88 or log onto www.ccard.org which launches in December 2003/early January 2004.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact Lynda Christie or the c:card team on: ccard@lpct.scot.nhs.uk.