

Sexual health and relationships

It's not worth the risk

Sexual health

If your child is sexually active, it is important that they use contraception which both partners have agreed in order to avoid pregnancy. They may not wish to discuss this with you, or you with them. We would advise you to be as open as you feel able about this subject - you are probably the best person for them to talk to.

Contraception is offered to young people to prevent them from getting pregnant or contracting a sexually transmitted infection. Most contraception is 99% reliable. They can get pregnant or get a sexually transmitted infection (STI) even if it is the first time they have sex so they need to use a condom to prevent STIs. Use a LARC (long-acting reversible contraception) like an implant to prevent pregnancy.

At a sexual health clinic, all forms of contraception will be discussed, and the most suitable method offered. No child under thirteen years will be seen without parental consent. Those over thirteen years will be assessed for their competency in making decisions about their sexual health. They will be encouraged to discuss these decisions with you by the health professional.

The health professional will discuss with the young person all aspects of sexual health including delaying sexual activity and being able to say no.

C-Card scheme

A C-Card scheme is available to 13-24 year olds who live, work or attend school or college in Merton or Sutton, they can pick up free condoms with a C-Card. All they need to do is register with a trained professional who will show them how to use a condom, and give them the opportunity to talk about any questions they might have about their sexual health.

Please be aware that all sessions are fully confidential, and their details will not be passed on to anyone including parents, friends, teachers and other family members without their explicit consent.

However, we have a duty of care to protect children and young people and if we think they might be at risk of harm

we may need to discuss them with others. They would be kept informed of what is happening.

www.gettington.org.uk/services/sutton/c-card-scheme

What to do

If they have had unprotected sex, emergency contraception can stop them getting pregnant as long as they take it within 120 hours. Tell them to ask their school nurse, GP, pharmacist or sexual health clinic for advice.

If they've had unprotected sex and their period is late, advise them take a pregnancy test at their GP surgery, pharmacist or sexual health clinic.

Encourage them to go to their GP or sexual health clinic to find out about different types of contraception. Talk to their parent/carer about what to do. If they feel they can't, there are lots of places to get help and advice.

We advise that you discuss all of the following with your child/young person:

- Under Pressure.
- Chlamydia.
- LGBT and sexual health.
- Relationships.
- Safer Relationships.
- Grooming.
- Sexting.

Under pressure?

- Don't have sex because their boyfriend or girlfriend wants them to but they're not sure. It's completely up to them.
- Remember it's against the law to have sex if they're under 16.
- Don't let their judgement be affected by drugs or alcohol.

They may be drunk and agree or do something they would not normally do. Tell them to try to plan ahead and think what they would do if they get into a difficult situation. Be prepared with a condom.

Chlamydia is a real risk

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI. Most people who are infected have no symptoms, so they do not know they have it. It is easily treated but if left untreated, it can cause complications including infertility. Condoms can protect against chlamydia.

If they think that they may have been exposed to any sexually transmitted infection or as soon as they notice any symptoms, even if they apparently clear up. If they are in a new relationship and want advice around protection and contraception options tell them to go and speak to a health

professional or visit their nearest sexual health clinic before they make any decisions.

www.swish.nhs.uk/sutton-and-merton/sexual-healthservices

Clinic staff can offer advice on a range of issues and can carry out testing and treatment for STIs, pregnancy tests, prescribe contraception including emergency contraception and offer advice around healthy, safe relationships.

LGBT and sexual health

Current guidelines suggest that gay and bisexual men should have an HIV test at least once every 12 months. If they are changing sexual partners regularly or have multiple sexual partners, it is important to get tested more often for sexually transmitted infections than the suggested 12 months. They should always go for a test if they think that they have been exposed to any sexually transmitted infection or as soon as they notice any symptoms, even if they apparently clear up. Some infections can be treated easily with antibiotics and are completely curable. HIV is not curable, but effective health monitoring and treatments are available in the UK.

If they are in a new relationship and want to stop using condoms, it is advisable to continue to use condoms for three months, and then both go for a full sexual health screen, just to be sure.

If they think that they may have been exposed to any sexually transmitted infection or as soon as they notice any symptoms, even if they apparently clear up. If they are in a new relationship and want advice around protection and contraception options go and speak to a health professional before they make any decisions.

For specific advice regarding LGBT sexual health visit www.nhs.uk/Livewell/LGBhealth/Pages/Gayhealththeissues.aspx

Relationships

I try to treat people I cross paths with in the same way I would like to be treated.

They can have all sorts of different relationships that can be fulfilling and rewarding, for example with friends, parents, families, neighbours and teachers. However, relationships aren't always easy and they might have problems sometimes. They must remember to keep talking to each other. Talking and communicating helps in many ways.

Friends are very important to young people. They are good for mental health, well-being and self-confidence. It's hard

when they argue, and they can feel confused and upset. It's better to have a few friends who want the best for them than lots of friends who try and make them do things they don't want to do.

Many young people think that having a boyfriend or girlfriend is the most important relationship - but they must not feel they have to just because their friends are, or do anything they're not ready for. Similarly they may feel put under pressure to be in a relationship which may even include a forced marriage.

Signs include

- Becoming unhappy or withdrawn.
- Missing school.
- They should not be made to do anything they don't want to do or encouraged to take part in things which make them scared.

Talking helps

- To have good relationships with people, they need to talk about how they're feeling.
- Treat people the way they would like to be treated and listen to what they're saying.
- If they're having problems with their parents or carer, talk to someone outside the family who they trust, like a friend or teacher.

Safer relationships

It's really important they feel safe in any relationship they're in.

- Trust themselves to know when something is wrong.
- Consider whether they can trust people they don't know.
- They don't have to do things that they think are unsafe or make them feel bad.
- They should never be put under pressure to have sex.
- They should never be put under pressure to do anything they do not want to do.
- Know where to get help.

Grooming and exploitation

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation.

Sometimes people are not who we think, or want us to think they are. Paedophile networks groom young people, by making them believe they are their friends. They have sophisticated tactics. They befriend young people, giving them gifts, money, drugs and alcohol and use violence and intimidation to control them, subjecting them to abuse.

Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. They are not their friends and they must speak out as soon as they can, before things get any worse.

Sometimes young people can be radicalised into changing their beliefs and groomed by extremists to commit crimes and get involved in terrorist activity.

Sexting

Sexting is the sending and receiving of naked pictures, 'underwear shots', sexual or 'dirty pics' or rude text messages or videos. This can be via mobile phones, social networks, emails or social apps.

Most mobile phones and tablets have built in cameras and most are linked up to email and social network accounts.

Police have warned of the dangers sexting can have including loss of control and leaving young people at the risk of being exploited by paedophiles and sexual predators.

Many young people feel under pressure to send nude or sexual photos of themselves, or let others take photos because their boyfriend or girlfriend said "if you loved me you would do this" reassuring them that no one else would see this picture. Photos like these are often not respected and can be posted as revenge or shown around carelessly to anyone else. Once someone hits send, they have ultimately lost control of that picture and where it may end up. Each action online leaves a digital footprint and everything anyone does online is out there in cyberspace even if they think something has been deleted.

They do not have to feel forced into doing anything they are not comfortable with. Talk to someone they trust if they feel pressured. Any incidents of bullying are unacceptable no matter where they are and should not be tolerated. Do not dismiss sexist language or behaviour as funny.

Some people feel a need to gain attention and notoriety from the sexting which can often be a result of insecurity or a lack of confidence.

Is sexting legal?

The law is quite clear on sexting. It is illegal to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they're the person in the picture. If they are under the age of 18, the law sees them as a child. Therefore, if they have any indecent images or videos of somebody who is under 18 they would technically be in possession of an indecent

image of a child - even if they are the same age.

Contacts

Relationships

Get Connected

www.getconnected.org.uk
0808 808 4994 (11am-11pm every day)

Relate

www.relate.org.uk
0300 100 1234

LGBT

For specific advice regarding LGBT sexual health visit

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/LGBhealth/Pages/Gayhealththeissues.aspx

Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk
Information service 08000 50 20 20

Get Connected

Offers a telephone counselling service for anyone aged 25 or under.

www.getconnected.org.uk
0808 808 4994 (11am-11pm every day)

Switchboard (LGBT+ helpline)

www.switchboard.lgbt
0300 330 0630 (11am-11pm, everyday)
Email chris@switchboard.lgbt

Broken Rainbow UK

www.brokenrainbow.org.uk
0800 999 5428
Email: help@brokenrainbow.org.uk
National helpline specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people experiencing domestic violence.

Relate

www.relate.org.uk
0300 100 1234

Sex & sexual health

Getting it on

Sutton sexual health, drugs & alcohol

services for teenagers.

www.gettington.org.uk

Sutton C-Card Scheme

www.gettington.org.uk/services/sutton/c-card-scheme

Contacts

South West London Sexual Health

Services

www.swish.nhs.uk/sutton-and-merton/sexual-health-services

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexandyoungpeople

SXT

www.sxt.org.uk

Helps find sexual and reproductive health care services in your local area.

Just text your POSTCODE to 07781 470056 and they will text you back a list of choices.

Supportline

www.supportline.org.uk

01708 765200

Email: info@supportline.org.uk

Get Connected

Offers a telephone counselling service for anyone aged 25 or under.

www.getconnected.org.uk

0808 808 4994 (11am-11pm every day)

Family Planning Association

www.fpa.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust

www.tht.org.uk

THT Direct 0808 802 1221

Email: info@tht.org.uk

Brook

www.brook.org.uk

Ask Brook

Confidential text and webchat service for young people under 25 offering sexual health information.

Wud U? app

Lets you find out how some young people end up being sexually exploited. You can think about the decisions you would make if you were in the same situation, and get advice about your decisions. Download for

free now on iPhones, iPads and Android devices by searching 'Wud U' on the App Store or Google Play.