



Policy Document

SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION (SRE)

Background Information

Baldon School is a maintained, co-educational community school for students aged 11-18. Students largely come from the Baldon Colliery, East Baldon, West Baldon, Whiteleas and Biddick Hall areas; they consequently reflect the diversity of social and cultural natures of these localities.

Aims of SRE

At Baldon School we aim to support young people in coping with adolescence and relationships and prepare them for a adult life in which they can:

- enjoy their sexuality;
- behave responsibly with their personal and sexual relationships;
- have sufficient information and skills to protect themselves and others from infection of unwanted pregnancy including accessing services and advice;
- have the confidence and self-esteem to value themselves and others;
- communicate effectively;
- neither exploit nor be exploited.

The Promotion of Values and Morals within SRE

There is often concern about the values and morals that should be promoted by those involved in delivering sex and relationship education. The **Family Planning Association** facilitated an event that brought together a group of people from diverse cultures and faiths who agreed the values below. After discussion with the relevant parties concerned we at Baldon School, decided these were the values we wanted incorporating into our SRE policy. We hope these values will guide our young people's decisions, behaviour and judgement, during adolescence and their adult lives.

- A respect of self.
- A respect for others.
- Self discipline regarding their sexuality.
- Non-exploitation in sexual relationships.
- Commitment, trust and bonding within sexual relationships.
- Mutuality in sexual relationships.
- Honesty with self and others.
- A development of critical self awareness for themselves and others.

- An exploration of the rights, duties and responsibilities involved in sexual relationships.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life.
- An acknowledgement and understanding of diversity regarding religion, culture and sexual orientation.

Rationale

It is probably pertinent at this point to stress that the SRE programme will be delivered in a sensitive and student-needs centred way. We acknowledge from the outset that, if this programme is to be successful, we need to create an atmosphere where students feel comfortable and safe. As directed, the programme will stress the values of family life and explore the benefits of meaningful, lasting and loving relationships between consenting partners. However, we also need to have a realistic perspective and acknowledge that many young people are sexually active in relationships that would not necessarily be described by some as 'meaningful, lasting and loving'. We feel strongly that the programme will be doomed to failure if it is based on some romantic notion of how we would like society to be rather than facing up to the realities of modern society and the existence of a teenage culture with its own value system.

However we also feel that it is of vital importance for the school, through the medium of the PHSC framework, to guide and advise our young people, and to make them aware of peer group, social and media pressures.

Why do we need to provide SRE in schools

- Children and young people say that they want to learn more about sex and relationships.
- Parents say that although they want to talk to their children about sex and relationships, they want the school to help them.
- It is a legal requirement for schools to provide SRE.
- Evidence shows that SRE:
 - can make a positive contribution to children and young people's personal and social development;
 - can help to prevent negative health outcomes such as unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

SRE in schools is a legal requirement

The Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (2000) is supported in legislation by the Learning and Skills Act (2000). This requires that in the context of SRE:

- young people learn about the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children;
- young people are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate having regard to the age and the religious and cultural background of the students concerned.

The 1996 Education Act consolidated all relevant previous legislation. In summary:

- the sex education elements contained in the National Curriculum science orders are mandatory for all students of primary and secondary age. Sex education in the National Science Curriculum covers anatomy, puberty and biological aspects of sexual reproduction;

- all schools must provide an up-to-date policy which describes the content and organisation of SRE provided outside the National Curriculum science order. It is the School Governors' responsibility to ensure that the policy is developed and made available to parents for inspection. Secondary schools are required to provide a SRE programme which includes (as a minimum) information about sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from SRE provided outside National Curriculum Science. They cannot withdraw their children from National Curriculum subjects.
- SRE contributes to preparing students for the "opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of a adult life "and shall " take such steps as are reasonably practical to secure that where SRE is given to any registered student it is given in such a manner as to encourage, those students to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life.

The evidence base for SRE

- High quality SRE, when linked to confidential sex advice services, is shown to delay the start of sexual activity.
- School based SRE contributes to meeting government public health priorities, such as achieving a reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI's) including HIV.
- SRE that aims to prevent unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections should be initiated early, before patterns of sexual behaviour are established.
- Effective SRE offers an open and accepting attitude towards sex and sexuality.
- Young people need to be involved in their own learning; the use of active and participatory learning is therefore important in SRE.

What is sex and relationship education?

It is a lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development; it is also about the understanding of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and moral health. It is not about the promotion of sexual activity or sexual orientation – this would be inappropriate teaching.

Setting the policy in context

The following points are highlighted in the DFEEs document SRE Guidance and are considered good practice:

1. effective sex and relationship education is essential if young people are to make responsible and well informed decisions about their lives. SRE needs to be firmly rooted within a PSHCE framework;
2. a successful SRE programme will aid young people to respect themselves and others and to move with confidence from childhood through adolescence into adulthood;
3. the new guidance will equip students with the skills and understanding they need to live confident, healthy and independent lives, it will enable students to deal with difficult moral and social questions;

4. students should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage for family life and bringing up children; however the Government realises that there are strong and mutually supportive relationships outside marriage, but the guidance stresses that students should learn the significance of marriage and stable relationships. However, care needs to be taken that no child is stigmatised because of their home circumstances;
5. students should be empowered to appreciate difference and respect themselves and others in order to prevent and remove prejudices. Students should understand human sexuality, the benefits of delaying sexual activity and learn about obtaining appropriate advice on sexual health;
6. SRE should contribute to the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of students;
7. the principal underlying good practice is that effective SRE is best achieved through a whole school approach, which ensures that the school's policy is appropriately set for the age and the maturity of the students. This includes:
 - giving staff appropriate training;
 - ensuring that students' views are listened to.

Sex and Relationships Education and the PSHCE and Citizenship Framework – See Appendix 1

Organisation

It is delivered through:

- pastoral lessons;
- the Science and RE curriculum;
- addressing moral and ethical issues which may arise from apparently unrelated topics in all National Curriculum subjects. Within this category, as long as any discussion takes place within the context of the subject it will not be deemed to be part of the SRE programme and therefore not subject to the parental right of withdrawal.

C. Teaching Approaches

A variety of approaches are used to give students relevant information; to enable moral issues to be explored through discussion; and to acquire appropriate skills. Details can be seen in the scheme of work.

D. Student Groupings

- Mixed ability, mixed gender.
- In response to student request, some sessions will be held in single gender groups.

Specific Issues

The following issues may occur as part of education. Staff, parents and students need to understand the school's procedures.

A. **Confidentiality and Advice** – please see Appendix 2 for additional information

Students will be made aware that some information cannot be held confidential, and made to understand that if certain disclosures are made certain actions will ensue. At the same time students will be offered sensitive and appropriate support.

The following procedures will be adhered to by all adults:

- (i) disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse:
 - the school's child protection procedures will be invoked – person in-charge of child protection issues is Mrs E M Hayes/Mrs A Moore
- (ii) disclosure of pregnancy or advice on contraception:
 - it is hoped that the following procedure will ensure that students who are in difficulty know that they can talk to an adult in the school and that they will be supported.

Professional information and guidance will always be sought from a health professional.

The school will always encourage students to talk with their parents first:

- students should be asked whether they can tell their parent(s) and whether they want help in doing so. If this takes place subsequent responsibility then lies with the parent(s). It will need to be checked;
 - if students refuse to tell their parent(s) the adult should then refer them to a health professional;
 - the adult should report the incident to the head teacher who will consult with the health professional about informing the parent(s).
 - Learning Mentor involvement
- NB When discussing a sensitive issue with parents it must be also be made clear that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

B. **Family Life**

The value of family life is an important aspect, which will be approached largely through a consideration of the qualities and relationships between the group of people, with an emphasis on stability, respect, caring and support.

- C. As part of the SRE programme issues of contraception, HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and abortion are addressed. Facts are presented in an objective and balanced way, with students being encouraged to consider their attitudes and values. They will be made aware of the difference between fact, opinion and religious belief.

D. Parental Rights

(i) Under the 1993 Education Act parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex education which is being taught outside the National Curriculum. Parents wishing to exercise this right should contact school

(ii) Any complaint about the sex education curriculum should be made to the Head Teacher who will report to the Governors.

E. C-Card - See Appendix 3

Monitoring and Review

- A. SRE will be monitored by the Directors of Learning, Heads of Science and RE as well as the school nurse.
- B. Tutors and students will complete an annual evaluation.
- C. The full policy will be made available to all parents.
- D. A nominated Governor will have a link role between the school and the Governing Body

Dissemination of the Policy

The SRE is available to view on the school website and hard copies can be made available on request. The programmes of study are available on request to parents, the L.E.A. and OFSTED through the Head Teacher.

APPENDIX 1**SRE Checklist**

	SRE as part of National Curriculum Science	SRE as part of PSHE: Attitudes and Values	Personal and Social Skills	Knowledge and Understanding
Key Stage 3	<p>The physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence</p> <p>Human reproduction, including the menstrual cycle and fertilisation</p> <p>How the growth and reproduction of bacteria and the spread of viruses can affect health</p>	<p>Explore and value the range of cultural and religious beliefs on aspects of sexuality and sexual health</p> <p>Explore the reasons for having sex. Understand that sex involves emotions, and should involve a sense of respect for one's own and others feelings, decisions, rights and bodies</p> <p>Explore and recognise the effects of bullying and the unacceptability of it within school and wider society</p> <p>Explore and understand difference in relation to gender, race and sexuality, and how it feels to be different or discriminated against</p> <p>Explore, understand and be able to describe the positive qualities within a relationship</p> <p>Explore body image and self esteem and understand its impact on sexual health</p> <p>Develop a critical awareness of messages about gender, appearance and sexuality within the media and elsewhere</p>	<p>Develop the range of personal and social skills needed for relationships with family and friends including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation skills • Decision making skills • Assertiveness skills • Listening skills <p>Be able to recognise pressures from others, be able to resist this pressure and seek help</p> <p>Be able to discuss relationships</p> <p>Be able to recognise, express and manage emotions including loss caused by change, divorce and separation</p> <p>Develop skills in challenging prejudice and valuing diversity</p> <p>Be able to seek help and advice from sexual health and community services, as well as other adults such as parents and carers</p>	<p>How relationships affect health and well-being</p> <p>How family life including marriage supports the upbringing of children</p> <p>Aspects of sexual health including sexuality, contraception, safer sex, abortion, HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections</p> <p>Meaning of confidentiality in school and health settings</p>

<p>Key Stage 4</p>	<p>Children and young people know and understand the effect of sex hormones and how sex is determined in humans</p> <p>Some medical uses of hormones including the control and promotion of fertility</p> <p>Techniques such as abortion ivf embryo selection and the ethics involved</p>	<p>Have opportunities to think about the consequences of sexual activity and relationships</p> <p>Identify different value frameworks and understand how they affect behaviour</p> <p>Explore and understand exploitation and abuse within relationships</p> <p>Explore and recognise links between risk taking and sexual activity with alcohol and drug use</p> <p>Identify and understand rights and responsibilities within relationships</p>	<p>Be able to demonstrate assertiveness skills</p> <p>Be able to discuss a range of moral and social issues, including cultural attitudes towards sexuality, contraception, abortion, the age of consent</p> <p>Have the skills to access local and national support</p>	<p>How different contraception methods work and where to get advice on sexual health issues such as abortion, STIs including HIV and safer sex</p> <p>How risk taking affects sexual health and well being</p> <p>The law affecting young people and sex</p> <p>The range of advice and support in the local community and nationally</p>
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<p>Citizenship</p> <p>Key Stages 3 and 4</p>	<p>To participate in SRE policy and programme development and review.</p> <p>To consider the effect of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities on beliefs and attitudes to sex, relationships, gender and sexuality</p> <p>To be critically aware of the effect of messages imparted by the media about sex, relationships, gender and sexuality.</p> <p>To know about and understand the social, cultural and economic impact of HIV as a global epidemic</p> <p>Practice expressing their personal opinions and listening to those of others about a range of issues such as marriage, contraception, abortion, gender, sexuality and teenage pregnancy</p> <p>Develop the skills of empathy, respect and understanding in relation to sex, sexuality and relationships.</p> <p>Take responsibility for one's own sexual attitudes and behaviour</p> <p>Be able to express, understand and evaluate different views that people hold about sex, sexuality and relationships e.g. homosexuality, sex before marriage</p>
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APPENDIX 2

Confidentiality Policy

As teachers we can:

- provide young people with advice regarding contraception and the availability of health services.

As teachers we should:

- encourage young people to discuss their sexual behaviour and needs with their parents/carers/health professionals.

As teachers we cannot:

- ensure confidentiality - if you feel a student is at risk of physical or sexual abuse you are duty bound to inform the Designated Teacher or Head Teacher who will initiate child protection procedures.

In case of disclosure we should:

- explain to students why confidentiality has to be broken and what the next step will be;
- reassure the students that their best interests will be maintained at all times;
- inform students about accessing sources of confidential support and information.

The following paragraph is a legal experts interpretation of our position regarding confidentiality:

Accordingly a teacher approached by an individual student for specific advice on contraception or other aspects of sexual behaviour should, wherever possible, encourage the student to seek advice from his or her parents, and, if appropriate, inform the relevant health service professional (e.g. the student's GP or the school doctor or nurse). Where the circumstances are such as to lead the teacher to believe that the student has embarked upon, or is contemplating, a course of conduct which is likely to place him or her at moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, the teacher has a general responsibility to ensure that the student is aware of the implications and is urged to seek advice as above. In such circumstances, the teacher should inform the head teacher. The head teacher should arrange for the student to be counselled if appropriate and, where the student is under age, for the parents to be made aware, preferably by the student himself or herself (and in that case checking that it has been done). Whether the specialist support services (including school health professionals) or the local education authority should also be involved will depend upon the particular circumstances involved and the professional judgement of staff.

APPENDIX 3

The C-Card

Index:

1. What is the C-Card Scheme
2. Delivery of the scheme
3. How to get a card
4. How it works
5. Advantages of the scheme
6. Key messages
7. Responsibilities for the staff
8. Condom supply
9. Stock
10. Registration prompt sheet
11. Pack contents

Appendices:

4. Fraser Guidelines
5. Staff prompt sheet
6. Registration steps 1-4
7. Frequently asked questions

What is the C-Card Scheme

A C-Card scheme is a confidential sexual health service for young people aged 13 to 19 years of age that provides free condoms, information and advice at convenient times and in a variety of locations. It is more than a condom distribution scheme. C-Card schemes offer supported access to condoms with the young person carrying a card with a personal identification number, which allows the service provider to monitor the access whilst maintaining user confidentiality.

C-Card schemes give service providers greater opportunity to support young people in safely managing their sexual health, in comparison to general condom distribution schemes where condoms are freely available to take at will, in any quantity and without appropriate advice and information.

Delivery

The C-Card Scheme will be an inclusive part of Boldon Schools SRE Policy. It will be a non-judgemental service where young people are comfortable to talk in confidence about their sexual health and needs.

The Scheme will have a one point of contact registration system within Boldon School. Staff who register students for the C-Card Scheme will be welcoming and friendly and will hold consultations in a private and confidential environment. In addition to the provision of condoms and lube, the C-Card Scheme will ensure appropriate sexual health advice is provided including advice on delaying participation in an active sexual relationship. The Scheme will ensure that it is accessible to all young people in Boldon School as identified by SLT and School Governors.

Stock of resources will be managed and ordered by staff responsible for its delivery, in order that there is always sufficient supplies available at all times.

A young person's condom pack will be self-selected by the young person from the available range and for each condom a sachet of lubricant should be provided. Schemes may choose to offer fewer condoms to younger people i.e. a maximum of 6 for 14 to 15 year olds, this is down to the discretion of the member of staff and based upon the young person and how they relate to the registration.

How to get a C-Card

1. To get a card a young person needs to be registered on to the scheme. They will attend a registration process where personal details will be entered onto a data base by a trained member of staff.
2. The member of staff will discuss with the young person a range of things including the law, relationships, STI's, unwanted pregnancy, how to use a condom and if it is thought necessary sign post the young person to a partner agency for drug and alcohol advice.
3. Once this is complete and the member of staff feels the young person is ready for a C-Card they will be given their own personal ID number, and can start accessing free condoms and lubricants.

4. Once the young person has the C-Card they don't always have to return to the point of registration to receive free condoms, they can attend any C-Card registered site.

How Does it Work

Wherever there is a C-Card sign young people can sign up for free condoms and lubricants by undertaking the registration process, this will ensure that it is appropriate to offer them this service.

The scheme is available from a range of places in South Tyneside including:

- Health Centres
- GP Practices
- Young Peoples Centres
- Colleges and Schools
- Children's Centres

Advantages of the C-Card Scheme

- Supports and empowers young people to access free condoms and confidential advice
- Supports a holistic approach to sexual health which lends the opportunity to talk to young people about broader sexual health and relationship issues.
- Strengthens the whole safe sex agenda
- Gives young people an alternative route into sexual health services

Key Messages of the C-Card Scheme

Advice to young people should always be in the context of helping them to resist pressure to have sex at an early stage in the relationship and therefore prevent unwanted pregnancies. They should be able to feel confident in making the safe and responsible choices. We as a School must also convey the message to boys the importance of sexual health and contraception when they become sexually active.

Families matter. Evidence shows that where open discussion takes place between Parents/Carers and their children about sex relationships their children are more likely to use contraception when they eventually do become involved in sexual activity. Young people should be encouraged to talk to their parents or Carers about sexual health.

The legal age of consent is 16 regardless of sexual orientation. However young people are unlikely to be prosecuted for mutually agreed sexual activity where there is no evidence of exploitation. The Law does not affect a young person's right to confidential advice on contraception, condoms, pregnancy and termination or their ability to consent to treatment, even if they are under 16. It is possible to issue condoms and sexual health advice to under 16s however staff must use the Fraser Guidelines (App 4)

Responsibilities for Staff

- Assessing the competency of young people wishing to sign up to the scheme
- Assessing a young person's possible allergic reaction to latex or issuing guidance that this may be a potential problem
- Re-Registering a young person who have used up their allocated C-Card visits
- Promoting the C-Card Registration Scheme at their location
- Ensure that staff are available to take requests for registration
- Issuing condoms to young people already registered
- Signposting to appropriate Services when necessary i.e. Matrix drug and alcohol service.
- Ordering and maintaining stock items

Condom Supply

Ease of access to free contraceptive supplies is seen as paramount in order to reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy. The use of condoms is the only contraceptive method which also reduces the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections STIs.

Purpose

1. This policy will enable trained school staff to provide condoms according to best practice
2. It aims to ensure all necessary information is given to young people for them to make informed choices about the use of condoms
3. It will provide invaluable guidance on undertaking the initial steps in sexual health activity
4. It will offer guidance on the number of condoms to supply

Stock

All condoms supplied by Boldon School are lubricated with sensitol lubrication. They comply with the highest safety standards are tested electronically and have the CE quality assurance mark.

All stock is kept within a secure location and issued in a private environment.

Staff will be responsible for ensuring there are sufficient supplies available to students at all times. School stock will include hypoallergenic latex condoms lubricated with sensitol

Students may request latex free condoms because they or their partners have a latex allergy. Staff will take this into consideration when ordering new stock.

Registration Prompt Sheet

The registration prompt sheet (App 5) will help staff ensure the necessary points are covered during registration. Staff will be prompted to discuss condom safety, STIs, emergency contraception, the Law. It is not expected that students will know everything about sexual health but they should be able to demonstrate that they have a grasp on the possible consequences of sexual activity for themselves and their partner should they not use protection.

Staff will be trained to a very good standard but will interpret individually how they deliver the registration process, but this should include the following.

1. Once issued it would be advisable to store condoms in a cool dry place
2. Check all outer packaging for damage
3. Check the expiry date. Out of date condoms are more likely to break
4. Ask about latex allergies
5. Advise on procedure when opening condom taking care not to damage with nails jewellery etc. Be aware of the way in which it rolls down.
6. Advise on application of the condom
7. Never double up it increases risk of splitting
8. Only use water based lubricants (sufficient supply given by staff)
9. Advise on procedure once sexual contact has taken place.

If assessed as competent the young person will then be given a registration pack. It will be helpful to talk through the contents with the young person so they understand the differences of the items within of the pack.

Pack Contents

- Plain paper bag
- Selection of condoms based upon the preference of the student
- Pa sante water based lubricant (sufficient for 1 sachet per condom)
- Pocket information guide '**Take Me You're Worth It**' a pocket guide to sexual health in South Tyneside
- How to use a condom. A step by step guide on the correct application, use, and safe disposal of a condom.

APPENDIX 4

When working with young people 16 years of age and under in the area of sex education and relationships, it is regarded as good practice to refer to the Fraser Guidelines.

Fraser Guidelines – can you give contraceptive and sexual health advice and information to under 16 year olds without parental consent.

Are you satisfied that:

- The young person can understand the advice and has sufficient maturity to understand what is involved in terms of the moral, social, and emotional implications.
- You can't persuade the young person to inform their parents or to allow you to inform them on your behalf that contraceptive advice is being sought.
- The young person would be very likely to begin or to continue sexual/intercourse relations with or without contraceptives.
- Without contraceptive treatment the young person's physical or mental health or both would be likely to suffer.
- The young person's best interests require the professional to give advice without parental consent.

Appendix 5

Topic to Discuss	Notes
What is C-Card - Explain Scheme - Latex allergy	13-19 free confidential male or female for anyone no matter if their having sex thinking of having sex or are just curious. Latex allergy discuss importance of being aware. Establish the confidence of the young person inform of confidentiality
Condoms - Why use condoms - Different types - Reliability - Consistent use - Correct use - Safety	Young person must demonstrate correctly at least once. Instruct if necessary. Check quality marks, check for damage, use by date, care needed when opening, ensure right way up (Mexican Hat) use only once, safe disposal, talk about how to use safely sharp fingernails, jewellery, teeth piercings any oil based lubricants. 98% effective at preventing pregnancy. STI prevention depends on STI
Sexually Transmitted Infections - Awareness - Bacterial /Viral - Testing - Discussing STIs with a partner	Young person must have an understanding of STIs can they name some? What they are and how they are passed on (Chlamydia Gonorrhoea Genital Warts HIV Hepatitis B) Discuss the Chlamydia screening programme positive in 1 in 14 sexually active 15 to 24 year olds often symptomless can lead to infertility
Emergency Hormonal Contraception - What is it for	For emergencies only, 72 hours more effective sooner it is taken, free from A&E most GPs Pharmacies sexual health clinics.

Appendix 6

1. Get to know the young person	2. Explain the C-Card
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Query why access to the scheme • Determine if engaged in sexual activity • Ask and fill in on line registration form • If under 16 refer to Fraser Guidelines • Inform young person of their ID No and why this is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the young person what they can expect from the C-Card Scheme • Explain confidentiality policy • Advise of further C-Card outlets in area • Explain if other schemes are accredited they can access explain the C-Card branding and what to look for • Talk about the range of resources available
3. Advice and demonstration	4. Complete registration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice regarding delaying sex should be provided in the first instance • Condom demonstration including those not sexually active • Offer sexual health advice and printed materials. Ask if they have any other issues they wish to discuss • If anything discussed that requires a referral onto other services (drug, alcohol) provide with relevant contact details, note on the record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise the young person of how many times they can visit the C-Card Scheme prior to review • 6 months or 10 visits under 16 12 months or 20 visits over 16 whichever happens soonest • Allow young person to select their choice of up to 12 condoms from the range available • Fill out registration details on online data base.

APPENDIX 7

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why has the Government allocated money to give out free condoms?

A: England has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe. In South Tyneside there is a history of high rates of teenage pregnancies and also high rates of deprivation. Evidence shows that there is a strong link between deprivation and high teen conception rates.

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Teenage pregnancies are a concern for a number of reasons. We know that younger mothers and their children suffer poorer health and living conditions than older mothers. Teenage mothers are more likely to give birth to a low birth baby weight, who is more likely to be admitted to hospital. In the longer term daughters of young mothers have a higher chance of becoming teenage mothers themselves.

Q: Why are condoms being issued by youth workers and teachers as well as health clinics?

A: Research suggests that young people often don't feel comfortable using traditional sexual health services. Evidence suggests that young people see teachers and youth workers as being credible source of information and support. The relationship between teacher's youth workers and young people is informal and individual and where support can be offered on sensitive issues. These workers can offer the ideal setting to seek support and advice on sexual health matters.

Q: Doesn't providing condoms just encourage more young people to have sex

A: The C-Card Scheme does not encourage young people to have sex. It provides information and condoms to those young people already having sex or who are considering having a sexual relationship by promoting a safe and healthy approach to their own sexual health.

The provision of sexual health advice information and resources is not known to increase the likelihood of early sexual activity; in fact it may well delay it, as young people who are better informed are more able to make the decision not to engage in early sexual activity.

Making it difficult for young people to access information about sexual health and obtain condoms may be a contributory factor in the prevalence of unprotected sex. Ignorance and inconsistent use of contraception contributes to the high rates of teenage pregnancies throughout the UK.

Q: How can you justify giving out condoms to under 16s when it is against the law for them to have sex

A: Young people are consistently exposed to sexual messages from the media, their peers and readily available on their mobile phones. These messages are often conflicting and can be very confusing. Access to accurate information in a safe, confidential and young person friendly setting is vital. Timing is crucial to contraceptive provision. Young people who are already sexually active will be less likely to change their sexual and contraceptive behaviour. Therefore education should start before young people become sexually active.

The scheme is not just about giving out condoms but allowing young people the opportunity to explore sexual issues and questions in a confidential environment and find out information about other sexual health services. Young people under 16 are encouraged to speak to their parents or another adult if appropriate and know that it is OK to say no if they do not want to have sex.

It is important to remember that most young people under the age of 16 are not having sex, in fact it is only about a third that do, but it is vital that we provide safe confidential and accurate advice and services to those young people who are sexually active.