

Evidence Based Public Health Practice

Teenage Pregnancy

Nottinghamshire

Condom Card (“C Card”) Distribution Scheme

Reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and rates of sexually transmitted infections, promotion of safe sex and sexual health

Introduction

In the majority of cases, using contraception effectively will prevent a pregnancy and using condoms will normally prevent someone from getting a sexually transmitted infection. Improving uptake and use of effective contraception will have the quickest impact on reducing teenage pregnancy rates. Furthermore, contraception services save the NHS over £2.5 billion a year - for every £1,000 spent on contraception services, £11,000 is saved. The School of Health Related Research’s recent review on behalf of NICE into the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of contraception services and interventions to encourage service use amongst socially disadvantaged young people (SchARR unpublished), identifies strong evidence that interventions which combine discussion with condom demonstration, lead to an increase in adolescent condom use and engagement with clinical services.

This Nottinghamshire example demonstrates a service which provides education, guidance and condoms in a range of accessible ‘young people friendly’ settings, targeting those young people most in need.

Background

The condom distribution service in Nottinghamshire was developed in response to youth workers’ requests from young people for free condoms. Many GP practices were also applying for grants to purchase condoms to distribute to their patients.

A proposal was put forward to secure funding to introduce the C Card scheme in 2004. Using available data and the intelligence available, it was possible to gain local knowledge regarding: areas with most unmet need, services available to offer the scheme and good local contacts that could be used to develop and implement the scheme.

A steering group chaired by the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator was established with the task of implementing the scheme across the county. Key work of the steering group was to:

- use local knowledge to identify areas of unmet need
- identify and assess possible sites to deliver the service
- agree who would administer and co-ordinate the scheme
- develop training for staff groups
- promote the scheme to services in their areas
- engage local commitment to delivering the service.

The Teenage Pregnancy Team in Nottinghamshire County Council agreed to co-ordinate the scheme and to deliver appropriate sexual health training and provide further support as necessary.

The service was to be universal so that all young people within the age range could access it, whilst at the same time being targeted to those most at risk. It was agreed it would be offered to the more vulnerable groups through the services they were already in contact with and in areas with high teenage conception rates. This approach provides the service in a range of settings that young people already have access to and those within their local community, in order to reduce the barriers to accessing condoms particularly around the financial costs and embarrassment. The scheme provides a consistent approach to providing condoms to young people to ensure they are receiving good quality, accurate information to empower them to make positive choices around their sexual health.

Current delivery

The C card scheme is a confidential service that provides free condoms advice and information for young people aged 13-24 years in a range of settings. Non-clinical settings include schools, youth clubs and Connexions services; clinical settings include GP practices and health centres. Other services provided along with the free condoms, include Sex and Relationships Education, lubricants, Chlamydia screening (optional), and sign-posting to other mainstream services, e.g. Contraception and Sexual Health Clinics and Genito-Urinary Medicine clinics. A limited number of sites also offer free pregnancy testing.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

To contribute to the reduction in the rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), through the provision of free condoms to young people in Nottinghamshire, aged between 13-24 years.

Objectives

- Develop a county-wide condom distribution scheme for young people aged 13-24.
- Target those identified as being most at risk and vulnerable.
- Reduce the barriers in accessing condoms, such as financial costs, embarrassment and availability.
- Increase the availability, accessibility and acceptability of condoms.
- Provide free condoms to young people who lack the financial capacity and social skills to access condoms through the “traditional” sources.
- Provide a service that empowers individuals to make sexual health choices.
- Sign-post and link individuals to mainstream sexual health services.
- Identify statistical information to inform strategic planning of young peoples’ services.

Appropriateness

The scheme addressed the growing awareness of unmet sexual health needs of local young people. Evidence shows that free condom schemes lead to increased access to and use of condoms. Recent reviews on behalf of NICE (into the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of contraception services and interventions to encourage service use amongst socially disadvantaged young people), identified strong evidence to support interventions that combine discussion and condom demonstration, as they lead to increases in adolescent condom use and engagement with clinical services.

All providers of the scheme undertake either the 'registration' or 'pick up' training before commencing delivery of the scheme. A pre-requirement of accessing C Card training is that providers have undertaken child protection training and the staff of the registration sites must also hold a current Criminal Records Bureau certificate.

Accessibility and Acceptability

The Nottinghamshire C Card scheme is universally offered to all young people aged 13-24 resident in Nottinghamshire, whilst being targeted to reach those individuals and groups of young people at risk of unplanned pregnancy.

Under the guidance of trained staff and within a confidential space, a comprehensive assessment and registration is completed for each first time user of the scheme, including under-16s using the Fraser guidelines. This process involves a discussion around delaying sexual intercourse, information on sexually transmitted infections and an opportunity to identify if there are exploitation or safeguarding issues. A condom demonstration is provided at each registration to explain how to properly put on, safely remove and dispose of a condom, together with use of lubricants. In addition, basic data, such as age, sex, ethnicity and first part of the postcode, are recorded.

Once a young person is registered, they are issued a card, with a unique number, which they use to access the scheme from any registration or pick up point. Monitoring forms are routinely completed by all workers at all registration and pick up points whenever young people access the scheme.

A limited number of condoms can be accessed at registration, after which, the young person can access any registration or pick up points across the county for further supplies. If extra contraceptive measures are needed, young people are referred to contraceptive and sexual health services. In some cases the C Card worker will advocate on the young person's behalf and accompany vulnerable young people to specialist services.

In September 2010 there were 208 C-Card operating sites in Nottinghamshire. The majority of the sites are registration and pick up points, whilst a few are pick up only sites (including community pharmacists). 22,966 young people have been registered with the scheme, 52.6% of which are male. By 2009 over 20 different service providers were engaged in delivering C Card across Nottinghamshire. The location of the C Card sites corresponds well with the areas of deprivation and higher rates of teenage conceptions suggesting that the sites are situated in the right place. Just over half of those who register with the C Card scheme become return users and the majority of return users, 93%, return to use the scheme between two and ten times.

The C Card scheme was originally set up for those aged from 13-19 years and the greatest proportion (91%) fall into this age group. A significant proportion, 71%, of those registering are in the 14-17 age group which is the key target age group in terms of reducing under 18

conceptions. Since 2008 the scheme has been extended and available for under 25s. The proportion accessing the scheme in the 20 and over age group is only 3%. The shorter length of time and fewer registration sites for this age group need to be taken into account with regards to reach.

The scheme is advertised in young people's settings through the displaying of posters, by providers working with young people and by word of mouth.

Service User Feedback

An evaluation undertaken by NHS Nottinghamshire County in 2010 consulted focus groups of young people. All of the participants stated that they valued the C Card scheme highly enough to recommend it to a friend.

The most frequently valued components of the C Card scheme were:

- a regular supply of free condoms
- a choice of condoms
- easy access to condoms
- opportunity to discuss sexual health and other worries
- advice support information learning about keeping safe and sex education
- staff's attitude
- confidentiality
- not feeling judged.

As part of the same evaluation, 37 providers responded to the staff survey and a further 20 staff participated in the focus groups. Through the training and experience of providing the scheme, staff identified that they have improved knowledge, skills and understanding of young people's sexual health and they have increased their skill and ability to raise / discuss sexual health matters with young people which they were previously reluctant or unable to do. In addition to this, the majority of responses also identified that they are more confident at engaging, (responding to and being proactive) with young people about sexual health.

"All of it is important to us – it is not just one part ..not just free condoms"

15 year old female

"There are no barriers to us using the C card as we have always known about it and always used it"

16 year old female

Partnership Working

- Nottinghamshire County Council – Education, Social Care, Youth Service, Youth Offending Service
- PCTs
- Connexions
- DAAT - Drug and Alcohol Action Team
- Learning and Skills Council
- Supporting People
- District Housing Departments
- Sure Start

Funding

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Average cost/ teenager /year} &= \frac{\text{total cost of the service from 2004 to 2009}}{\text{total number of enrollees from 2004 to 2009}} \\ &= \frac{\pounds 200,477.64}{19,663} \\ &= \pounds 10.20 \text{ per enrollee per year} \\ &\text{(which is equivalent to 85p per young person per month)} \end{aligned}$$

Effectiveness, Efficiency and Equity

The scheme promotes equity as it reaches those young people least likely to access mainstream sexual health and contraceptive services and addresses unmet health needs of those most at risk. It is a service, which successfully reaches out to BME groups and young males.

Based on the number of young people reached, and the cost of administering the scheme, the C Card scheme is proving to be cost effective, providing good value for money.

Costs averted include:

- cost of delivering a baby (vaginal or caesarean section)
- cost of termination
- cost of attending genitourinary clinics and STI treatment
- cost of any benefit payments that would be applicable to a young mother and other associated costs
- cost of treating complications of STI (such as infertility)
- cost of providing psycho-social support to teenage parents.

Table 2 shows some of the indirect costs of teenage conception and STIs to NHS Nottinghamshire County PCT

	Gum clinic	HIV test	Cost of termination	Cost of delivery (vaginal)	Caesarean Section	Benefits payment for a teenage mother not in employment over 3 years following birth (DfES 2006)
Cost per person	£83 (first visit)	£710 (first visit)	£1008 (pbr tariff 2010/11 range £473-£1543)	£2,880	£3,790	£19,000 - £25,000

Table 2 shows that the greatest cost incurred because of unprotected sex could be as much £83 + £710 + £3,790 + £25,000 (GUM visit + HIV test + delivery + benefits) = £29,583 over 3 years from conception. However, the minimum cost per person is **£83**.

5 key Steps to Setting Up the Service

1. Secure commitment and funding from partners.
2. Analyse local data and knowledge to effectively target those most at risk.
3. Involve young people in design, delivery, promoting and evaluation of the scheme.
4. Identify coordination, administrative support and expert advice and support for providers.
5. Provide multi disciplinary training for providers.

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