

Sex: it's your choice and nobody else's.

Hello!

Welcome to our quick guide to discussing sex with young people.

Early positive experiences of health services are likely to give young people the confidence to use a wider range of services in the future.

This guide will help you create a supportive atmosphere for young people from the start – because you never get a second chance to make a first impression.



Telling Sarah's story

Sarah's Movie* is a Somerset County Council and C&SH project aiming to engage and educate young people about sexual wellbeing.

The story

When a teenage girl named Sarah is faced with an unexpected pregnancy, her life is turned upside down. The day-to-day ritual of attending school, and going out with her friends seems like a distant memory as the responsibilities of having a baby start to hit home.

The sleepless nights, the lack of money, and no social life take their toll on her relationship with her loving boyfriend Pete, and Sarah's dream of a happily ever after fairy tale quickly starts to fade into a real life nightmare.

Will Sarah's closest friends and supportive mother be there for her when she needs them most – or will she have to go it alone?

Calling all Spielbergs and Jolies!

Students in nine schools were invited to help make a short film about 'Sarah' – a teenage girl faced with an unexpected pregnancy.

The students and film crew worked together to empathise with Sarah's position and develop a film that tells her story.

How you can use Sarah's Movie

- > With students in workshops to open up discussion.
- > As a training aid for use with other health advisors.
- > To share with and pass on to colleagues in other services.

You can see Sarah's Movie at www.xxxxxxxx.co.uk

“Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a successful teenage health service.” (Brook, 1999)

confidentiality can stop young people from seeing a school nurse or going to a clinic. Many students think the nurse will tell other authorities about sensitive or illegal matters.

You can break these mistaken beliefs by making sure your confidentiality policy is set out in a straightforward, plain-speaking way.

Making your policy clearly visible and talking to young people about confidentiality will also help to reassure them.

Why wait?

For young people, sometimes it seems like everyone else is having sex except them. But the majority of young people have sex for the first time when they're 16 or older (NHS Choices).

Reasons for having sex before 16

- to keep a boyfriend
- affection
- to rebel
- keeping up with friends
- popularity
- to belong

Trying to meet all these needs through sex can lead to regrets, low self-esteem and disappointment. Talking about whether sex is the only thing that will meet their needs can be useful and enlightening.

It's a personal choice

Talking about relationships can help young people to think through their decisions. It's part of supporting them to do what feels right for them. Here are a few questions that can open up the conversation:

- How confident do you feel that you each want it for yourselves – not just because the other person does or to please them?
- Do you feel like having sex will make you more popular, help you keep up with your friends or keep your boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Do you feel you could say no and that would be OK?
- Is anybody forcing you, pressurising you or bullying you into it?
- Have you and your girlfriend or boyfriend talked about using condoms and contraception?

- Have you agreed what happens next: whether you tell your friends afterwards and, if you're a heterosexual couple, what happens if there is a pregnancy?

No rush, no regrets

It's difficult for young people to be sure when they're really ready for sex. You may want to use the following techniques for encouraging them to delay until it's an active, informed choice.

1. Give the message that sex isn't a treadmill – they can get off. Just because they've already had sex doesn't mean they have to continue. It's fine to stop for a while until they feel ready.
2. Establish how they feel about it and what worries they have.
3. Discuss what makes a good relationship and how to explore non-sexual ways of being intimate and close to someone.
4. Make it clear that most under-16s aren't having sex and some aren't happy with the sex they are having.

5. Make sure they know where to access condoms, contraception, emergency contraception, abortion and support for choices about sexuality.

And when they're doing the right thing...

Acknowledge when a young person is behaving responsibly – like carrying condoms – and encourage them to value themselves.

Local services that young people can rely on

- Sexual health services
- Emergency contraception issue points – Minor Injury Units, A&E, pharmacists
- C&SH Clinics
- Young People's and walk-in clinics
- Genito-urinary Medicine Clinics
- C-Card and free condom issue points
- Chlamydia screening
- Local GP
- Free pregnancy testing
- NHS Direct