

Information on the Torfaen C-Card scheme

The Torfaen C-Card Scheme is part of a Welsh Assembly Government Initiative to reduce teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections across Wales. Monies were received from the Welsh Assembly Government and have been used to develop a local C-Card Scheme throughout Torfaen.

What is a C-Card Scheme?

A C-Card scheme is a coordinated free condom distribution network. It provides quick, easy and confidential access to condoms supported by written material. Young people will be able to get a C-Card by visiting an assessment centre. A trained professional will then ensure they have the skills and information necessary to make informed decisions regarding their sexual health before issuing a C-Card.

Why Torfaen?

Torfaen is ranked 7th highest out of 22 unitary authorities in Wales for its conception rates in under 18's and under 16's. Since 1922 the under-age conception rates for 13-15 years olds in Wales has been consistently higher and has risen more rapidly than in England. We also need to raise public awareness on sexually transmitted infections locally. The incidence of genital warts and Chlamydia is rising, particularly amongst young women. Chlamydia has long-term health effects, if not treated.

Why are condoms being given out at youth clubs as well as health clinics?

Research findings suggest that young people often do not feel comfortable accessing traditional sexual health services. Evidence suggests that young people see youth workers as being a credible source of information and support. The relationship between youth workers and young people is informal and individual support can be provided on sensitive issues.

All youth workers involved in the Torfaen C-Card scheme re trained and continually supported to provide the best service possible. Youth groups and projects can provide young people with the ideal setting within their communities to seek advice and support on sexual health matters and access to condoms.

Why are we giving out condoms to 14-16yr olds when it is against the law for them to have sex?

It is a fact that some under 16 year olds do have sex. A national study showed that only **50%** of under 16's reported using contraception when they have sex.

Making it difficult for young people to obtain condoms and related information may be a contributory factor in the prevalence of unprotected sex and sexually transmitted infections.

The Torfaen C-Card scheme is **NOT** about encouraging young people to have sex, but about encouraging those young people already having sex or about to have a sexual relationship, to have safe, healthy sex.

By providing condoms aren't we encouraging more young people to have sex?

This is a popular misconception. There is no evidence to suggest that providing condoms will encourage early sexual experimentation, nor increase pregnancy rates. The provision of sexual health advice, information and resources rather than increasing the likelihood of early sexual activity, may indeed delay it.



What the Torfaen C-Card scheme is about.

The scheme is NOT just about giving out condoms, but allowing young people the opportunity to explore sexual issues, raise questions in a confidential environment and gain information about sexual health services. Young people, particularly those under 16, will be encouraged to speak to a responsible adult. Professionals will ensure that young people know that it is OK to say no if they do not want to have sex.

Finally.....

Young people are consistently exposed to sexual messages from the media and their peers. These messages are often conflicting, and can be very confusing. Access to accurate information in a confidential setting is vital. Ignorance and inconsistent use of contraception contributes to the high rates of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

For further information contact:

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