

Review of Sexual Health

Project details

Full project title: Chlamydia Screening for Heterosexual Young Adults: Review of Interventions, Resources and Social Marketing Opportunities

Sponsor: South Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust

BSMC team: [Sara Bird](#)

Background

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed bacterial STI (sexually transmitted infection) in the UK, yet it often goes undiagnosed because up to 70% of women and 50% of men experience no symptoms. The treatment of chlamydia and its consequences is estimated to cost the NHS over £100 million each year in the UK .

Young people aged 16-24 years old accounted for 65% of all chlamydia infections diagnosed in genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics across the UK in 2007, and are the age group most likely to be diagnosed with an STI. However it is estimated that less than 10% of chlamydia infections are diagnosed, creating a large pool of undiagnosed individuals who can continue to unwittingly spread the bacterium to uninfected partners.

Bristol Social Marketing Centre was commissioned by South Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust to investigate the use of social marketing in increasing chlamydia screening rates among young people aged 15-24 in the local area.

The review

BSMC's review provided a brief background to the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP), before considering factors affecting screening uptake amongst young people aged 15-24 and characteristics of previous successful (and unsuccessful) interventions. BSMC then considered potential avenues for social marketing with this specific group of young people, such as what we know about the media that they use, credible role models and motivating messages. Finally, we considered the implications of all these findings to South Gloucestershire PCT, considering existing resources and capabilities, with recommendations for further research and possible interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, BSMC recommend that specific research is needed in the local area, covering:

1. The 'facts' about young people in South Gloucestershire e.g. where they 'hang out'; key schools, colleges and universities that contribute to the PCT's figures; demographic (and psychographic as far as possible) profiles of young people in the region, and key media use.

2. Insights into existing attitudes to sex, sexual health and sexual health services in the region, enabling us to improve services and communications
3. 'Brain storming' sessions with local young people to develop their ideal communications and services.
4. Testing of implemented services, both in terms of quantitative use, but also qualitative feedback to improve them further for each target group.

In conclusion, despite a vast number of interventions to improve screening rates and other sexual health targets, relatively few are evaluated and published. To develop effective interventions, we not only need to learn from these but also tailor these to the specific environment of South Gloucestershire and the young adults who live there.