



Royal College
of Nursing



Getting it right

for teenagers in your practice



Making sure that your practice is 'teenage-friendly' can help encourage teenagers to seek early sexual health advice – as well as advice about other issues such as teenage depression, suicide, self-harm, drugs and alcohol.

Being 'teenage-friendly' means:

- creating a welcoming environment so that teenagers feel at ease about coming to your practice
- letting them know what services you can offer them, and
- reassuring them that confidentiality will be maintained.

So how 'teenage friendly' is your practice?

Find out by doing the quiz *How does your practice 'score' with teenagers?*



Making your practice more teenage-friendly



Ensure confidentiality.

Get every practice team member to sign up to the practice confidentiality policy. Use posters and leaflets to advertise the policy. Reassure young people about confidentiality in consultations.



Organise a practice meeting with the whole team to discuss how you can all make your practice more teenage-friendly.

Get each member of the team to imagine that they are a teenager coming into the surgery with a problem, or wanting contraception, and to say how they think they would feel.



Train members of the practice in teenage health issues.

Make sure that all team members are skilled in communicating effectively with young people. Organise appropriate training for all practice members. Contact your Local Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, health promotion unit or PCT to find out what local training is available.



Audit the 10-18 year olds in your practice.

Find out: the total number and gender breakdown; the percentage seen in the last year; how many smoke and drink alcohol; the number seeking contraceptive advice and emergency contraception; and the number of teenage pregnancies and terminations.



Let young people know what your practice provides.

Display posters explaining what services your practice provides for young people so they know that they can get contraceptive advice as well as confidential support on other issues. Have a special practice information booklet for teenagers.



Consider running a young persons' clinic' in your practice or with other practices.

A school nurse, health visitor or youth worker might be able to help you with ideas for setting up the clinic. Involve young people in the planning stages too. Make sure you run the clinic at convenient times for teenagers.



Involve parents.

Talk to parents about the support and advice your practice offers to teenagers. In your practice leaflet, explain your practice policy about providing confidential advice to under 16s. You may also want to mention this opportunistically when a parent comes for a consultation.

Encourage parents to talk to their children about relationships and contraception. Help parents to access information about a range of health topics so that they can be a source of information for their children.

Encourage young people to involve their parents in any health-related decisions.

Make sure that the practice advice is directed to boys and young men as well as girls and young women.

Let young men know they are welcome too. Display posters and information leaflets that are aimed directly at boys and young men.

Make sexual health and contraceptive advice in your practice teenage-friendly.

Clearly advertise the fact that teenagers can get confidential advice even if they are under 16. Provide at minimum a 'starter' pack of condoms to promote safer sex. Publicise 'emergency contraception' and how to get an early appointment.

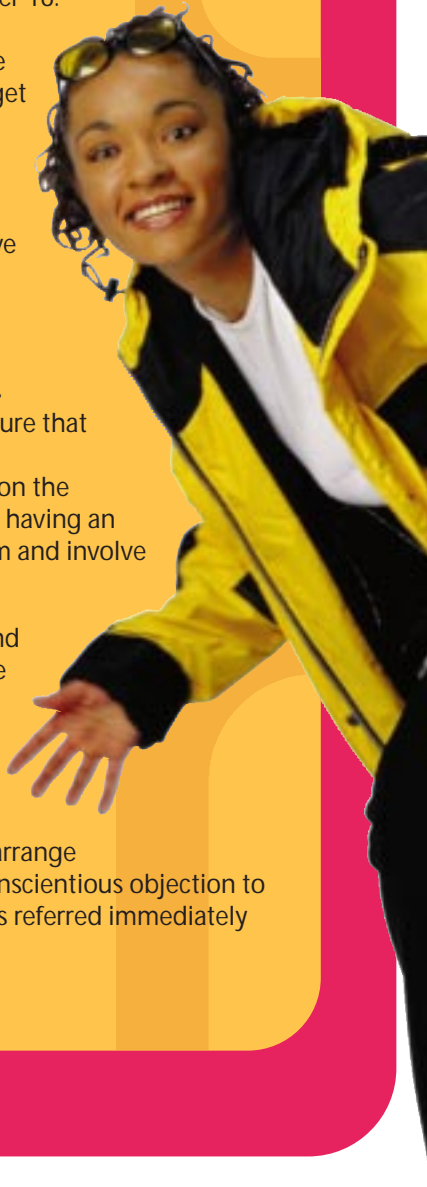
If a practice doctor is unwilling to give contraceptive advice or emergency contraception, make sure that alternative options are easily and quickly available.

Offer advice and support for teenagers who get pregnant.

If a teenager does get pregnant, make sure that they are given support and impartial advice on the options of continuing the pregnancy or having an abortion. Encourage teenagers to inform and involve their parents as soon as possible.

Put them in touch with relevant local and national support services. Local Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators will have a referral checklist on all local support services (see back page for how to contact your co-ordinator).

If a young person asks for an abortion, arrange for a rapid NHS referral. If you have a conscientious objection to abortion, make sure the young person is referred immediately to a service providing NHS referral.



How does your practice 'score' with teenagers?

Tick 'Yes' or 'No' ...

Yes No

- | | | | |
|----------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Do you have a written practice confidentiality policy which mentions confidentiality for under-16s? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Do you publicise emergency contraception in your waiting rooms? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Do you display magazines and information leaflets specially for young people in your waiting rooms? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Do you see under 16 year olds without a parent? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Do you offer a practice information leaflet for teenagers? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | Do you train your staff to be teenage-friendly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | Do you have a special appointment system for emergency contraception? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | Do you provide contraception to under 16 year olds? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Score How many questions did you answer 'Yes' to?

0 to 4

Should be able to do much better. Your practice needs to become more teenage-friendly.

5 or 6

Still room for improvement.

7 or 8

You are getting it right for teenagers. They probably feel welcome when they come to your practice.

Useful resources

to help make your practice teenage-friendly

Training resource

Confidentiality and young people. A toolkit for general practice, primary care groups and trusts

Available free from the Royal College of General Practitioners (address below).

Manual

The health care of young people in general practice

A complete guide to making your practice teenage-friendly. Published by Radcliffe Medical Press (Tel: 01235 528820; e-mail: orders@radcliffemed.com).

Leaflet

Private and confidential – Talking to doctors

A leaflet for young people giving them information about confidentiality. Available from Brook Publications (Tel: 01865 719410). Price £5 for 50.

Poster

Here to listen, not to tell

A3 poster on confidentiality. Available from Brook Publications (Tel: 01865 719410). Price: £2 for single copies, £6 for 10 copies.

Videos

Trust and Clueless

These two 10-minute videos can be used in general practices for training purposes. They show interactions in a surgery and are designed to encourage discussion of how to improve primary care services for young people. Available from the Royal College of General Practitioners (address below). Price £7 each.

The teenage pregnancy strategy

In England, a cross-government teenage pregnancy strategy has set a target to halve the under 18s' conception rate by 2010 and to support teenage parents to avoid their long-term risk of social exclusion.

Every top-tier local authority area has its own strategy led by a **Local Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator**, in partnership with health, education, social services and voluntary agencies. Details of your local co-ordinator are on the Teenage Pregnancy Unit website: www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk

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Further copies of this leaflet are available from the Royal College of General Practitioners (details below), or from RCN Direct on 0845 772 6100.



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