

THE C-CARD SCHEME

The C-Card is a scheme which provides Dorset's 13-24 years olds quick and easy access to free condoms from a wide range of venues across Dorset, including young people services, schools, and colleges. This allows them to visit the site they feel most comfortable and increases the likelihood of them accessing condoms when they need to.

It is a confidential service which also gives access to information and advice about sexual health and relationships; as well as an opportunity for young people to discuss any concerns they have and access support if they are experiencing risky or exploitative behaviour and situations.

We understand that some parents and carers may have questions about the C-Card scheme, here are the answers to our most frequently asked questions:

Is it legal to give condoms to under 16s without parents/carers consent?

Yes, it is completely legal to provide under 16s with condoms whilst using the C-Card scheme. They will access a consultation with one of our trained professionals, who will assess the young person's understanding and competence. To measure that, we will be following Fraser guidelines

To be deemed "Fraser competent" a young person must be capable of understanding all the information and any risks involved with becoming sexually active, and then using this knowledge to make a choice.

The Fraser guidelines were developed specifically around the provision of sexual health and contraception services to under 16s, and so they cover all the legal aspects in full. If there are any concerns during this consultation, appropriate referrals will be made to make sure that the young person receives whatever support is needed. This may mean that you will be made aware of the steps being taken to ensure the young person's safety.



Why do you give condoms to young people under the age of consent?

The legal age of consent in the UK is 16, however, we are aware that some young people will have sex or be considering becoming sexually active for the first time at a younger age. The trained professional delivering the consultation will always discuss the age of consent and what it means, their rights and responsibilities as well as encouraging the delay of sexual activity. If the young person is deemed Fraser competent (using the framework above), they will get access to C-Card to help them keep themselves as safer and as healthy as possible.

Are you encouraging young people to have sex?

No, being able to access the C-Card scheme, allows young people to access support and make their own informed decisions. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Knowledge about safer sex and sexual health remains important to ensure that young people are equipped to make safe, informed, and healthy choices as they progress through adult life. This should be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual way and allow scope for young people to ask questions in a safe environment.

Effective RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) does not encourage early sexual experimentation, it creates a safe space for young people to access the relevant information to support them make informed choices. Evidence shows that good quality RSE results in young people delaying first sexual activity, this boosts self-esteem and limits regret.

What about unintended pregnancies or STI risk?

If a young person decides to have sex, they have access to condoms to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and STIs, know how to use condoms properly, and are aware of where and how to seek support should they need to.

C-Card is also often delivered alongside an education session, where young people learn about and have a chance to discuss topics such as healthy relationships and delay, as well as the potential consequences of sex (pregnancy and STIs).



Will I be told if the school they attend is part of the C-Card scheme?

Some schools may inform parents/carers if they are operating the C-Card scheme, however not all. If you feel this would be beneficial to the school, you're welcome to ask and encourage they sign up by contacting dhc.sexualhealth.promotions@nhs.net.

Other groups such as youth centres or Targeted Outreach, may offer the C-Card as a part of their work, so it is easily accessible across all of Dorset.

Can I talk to my child/the young person I care for about the C-Card scheme?

Absolutely! If you feel comfortable talking openly about sex and relationships, it's great that they know that they can speak to you; but it's important that they feel comfortable too.

It's important that they feel heard and don't feel like they are being judged. Keep your conversation comfortable by not sharing your own personal experiences. It's okay not to have all the answers, so if you're ever asked a question, you don't know the answer to, look it up together using a trusted website such as www.sexualhealthdorset.org.

