

Many thanks for working with Sheffield Foyer to conduct this research. We would like to thank both Healthwatch Sheffield, the young people and staff at Sheffield Foyer for bringing this to our attention. Feedback such as this, is always helpful. As commissioners and services leads, we are always trying to develop services to ensure they are accessible, effective and relevant to young people, and your findings will be listened to and acted upon.

Local Sexual Health Services, such as the one in Sheffield have to adhere to the national guidance from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and the UK Health Security Agency (guidance was updated earlier this year, 2023) on the logistics and practicalities of running these kind of services [Integrated sexual health service specification \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/integrated_sexual_health_service_specification.pdf). There are certain criteria within these guidelines that we must adhere to, and there are things that services must deliver. Whereas there are other elements that allow more flexibility, allowing the commissioner and/or service provider to tailor the service to meet the needs of their specific area and population.

The Covid 19 pandemic had a huge impact on the work of Sheffield Sexual Health Service. Staff from the service at the Hallamshire Hospital department were drafted into other areas of the hospital to care for Covid patients, which reduced the number of staff in the departments to deliver sexual health services, which led to increase waiting times and pauses in some activities. The sexual health services delivered in the community by Primary Care Sheffield (GP hubs and pharmacies), continued throughout Covid. This team provided telephone sessions for patients, plus emergency contraception and Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) was still available in community settings. Social distancing meant clinical procedures had to be adapted, and some outreach work had to be paused. All of this, of course had a negative impact on service delivery and of course unfortunately reduced options for service users. Nonetheless, services are getting back to where they should have been pre-Covid and the research you have shared will help us to continue to do so.

It is timely that they you have presented the findings to us, as we are embarking on a review and evaluation of Sexual Health Sheffield, which will show us what is working well and where development and change might be needed, so the recommendations from the #SpeakUp report will be considered as part of this evaluation. We agree more could be done to ensure patients are seen in a location of their choice and we need to know more about where these places/ locations are, as we know this works best for increasing access and engagement for young people, so this is something we are reviewing and hoping to improve.

There are some short- and long-term goals and actions that we can address, and as the commissioners we will speak to manages of the service to address these. Once our review has been conducted and we have made recommendations to the service, this could be shared with Healthwatch and Sheffield Foyer. As an immediate action, I would like to share the Sheffield Sexual Health website with you. Anyone can use the site to improve their knowledge, request STI testing kits and book appointments. [Sexual Health Sheffield - Meeting Your Sexual Health Needs](https://www.sexualhealthsheffield.org.uk/). A main barrier to accessing the service for Foyer residents was transport and travel costs. I would like to highlight that there are various hubs around the city that can also be accessed for help with your sexual health and some of these hubs may be easier to commute to. Please see the link below: [Contraception Service | Sexual Health Sheffield - Meeting Your Sexual Health Needs](https://www.sexualhealthsheffield.org.uk/contraception-service/)

There are also pharmacies across Sheffield where individuals can access free condoms and emergency contraception [Emergency Contraception | Sexual Health Sheffield - Meeting Your Sexual Health Needs](https://www.sexualhealthsheffield.org.uk/emergency-contraception/).

The Sexual Health Service does run a range of outreach activities with groups across the city. The sexual health outreach team has a long-standing relationship with The Foyer, albeit some activities have changed over the years. In 2022 the sexual health service worked closely with The Foyer and our records shows that the service:

- attended a sexual health day where our staff supported the Foyer staff to deliver several activities, alongside Rachel Suddrick a Primary Care Nurse from Health Inclusion Team.
- we delivered training to 10 of the Foyer staff team (including the sexual health lead and the manager), which covered: sexual health promotion tools when working with young people, contraception choices, STI's, pregnancy pathway, access to services, resources and activities to use with young people around sexual health.

The Sexual Health Sheffield also currently provide 100 condoms per quarter. The Foyer Team have not asked for this number to be increased but if more are needed, please don't hesitate to contact us. Some of our work to bring services to the young people is carried out behind the scenes and in partnership with other organisations. The service works closely with Rachel Suddrick (Primary Care Nurse from Health Inclusion Team) and Rachel visits The Foyer every Monday to deliver health sessions. These sessions include taking and sharing condoms and our postal screening kits (CT/GC) for the young people living at The Foyer. Rachel also sits on the Foyer Advisory Committee and has ensured that knowledge of her being able to offer sexual health information, advice and screening, have been recording in meetings.

Other activities (delivered by us or in collaboration with others), links and relationship with/ at The Foyer include:

- a monthly drop-in clinic for blood borne virus tests,
- campaign materials and resources such a posters and leaflets,
- sharing of the service' s QR code (which links directly to SHS website), which The Foyer team were going to add to their information leaflet in the Move In packs, to ensure that all residents had access to information,
- the Foyer Team has the mobile number of one of the outreach workers, therefore a direct link into the service, which they can use to ask for advice, information, etc. The Foyer have not used this number to contract the services recently with any concerns or requests.

As you can see from the above, we do have existing support in place. We understand vulnerable young people are disproportionately affected by poor sexual health outcomes and we are happy to listen and discuss this further with you. However, please note that for activities other than those detailed (i.e., condoms and screening), an individual would need to attend service for other health needs such as treatment for STIs. Perhaps considerations should be given to the frequency of residents moving in and out of The Foyer, and with a regularly flow of new residents, it is important that Foyer staff share the sexual health information and opportunities regularly with services users, for them to feel supported.

We are also currently developing a communication and engagement plan which will tackle some of the myths and misconceptions you have reported, and hopefully increase aware of the service. Plus, part of the communications and engagement plan with specifically focus on young people and vulnerable groups, and therefore careful consider will be given to how we best communicate with these groups to improve knowledge and understanding. As well as that, we are working on a citywide training plan, and this is the forum where we can discussion options for training Foyer staff in sexual health interventions.

For those young people who are nervous to visit and the service I would like to reassure you that you will be welcomed and respected. The Sexual Health Service works offers Youth Clinics which is a

walk-in service for anyone aged 18 years and under. There is no lower age limit. A visit to the service would be anonymous, confidential and the service will not share a patients' attendance with their GP unless you express permission to do so. More information on our youth clinics can be found here [Youth Clinic | Sexual Health Sheffield - Meeting Your Sexual Health Needs](#)

I would like to thank you again for conducting the research. If you would like to discuss the topic further with us, please don't hesitate to contact me. We as Sexual Health Service partners thought it would be useful for the authors and/or young people to present the report to us face to face, with a discussion on their ideas on their ideas around sexual health. We thought we could visit you at Spring Lane sometime in September, if you would be happy to receive us? Also, we are re-establishing the Sexual Health Network which we would like to invite both The Foyer and Healthwatch to join.

I'll look forward to hearing from you.