



Relationships and Sexual Health:

A toolkit for professionals working with young people in Hertfordshire

What's in this toolkit?

This toolkit contains advice, guidance and resources on dealing with issues with sex and relationships that may arise when working with young people. It is aimed at anyone working with young people in Hertfordshire and contains links to local services as well as national resources. It covers:

1. Values and Behaviours



2. The Law



3. Safeguarding



4. Confidentiality



5. Sexual Health Interventions



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Values and Behaviour

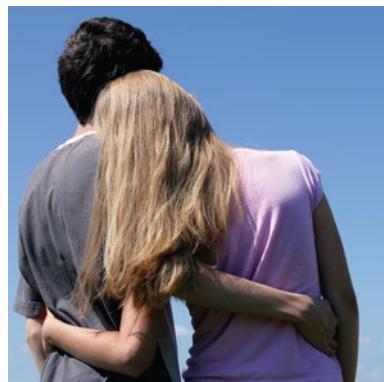
In Hertfordshire, children and young people have a right to expect that services will provide information, advice and guidance which is accurate and factual, covering a comprehensive range of information about sex, relationships, the law and sexual health, in order to assist them to make informed choices.

Services should be positively inclusive in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, age, religion or belief, or other life-experiences, particularly HIV status and pregnancy.

Maintaining appropriate boundaries between staff and the young person is particularly important where sexual health, sexual orientation and personal relationships are concerned. While staff need to provide young people with opportunities to safely discuss and explore their emerging sexuality and sexual behaviour, this must at all times be undertaken in a professional context.

Young people need to be able to make their own choices and decisions based on impartial and well presented information. If young people share information with you that conflicts with your beliefs and values it is important that you remain objective.

Professionals should never impose their own beliefs or values on the young person or make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation. Negative attitudes can seriously affect young people's feelings and self worth and could prevent them from seeking help and support around issues relating to their sexual health.





The Law

In England the legal age for young people to consent to have sex is 16, whether they are straight, gay or bisexual. The same age limits apply to young people with disabilities. The aim of the law is to protect the safety and rights of young people and make it easier to prosecute people who pressure or force others into having sex they don't want. Forcing someone to have sex is a crime.

Although the age of consent is still 16, the Government says that the law will not be used to prosecute young people under 16 who are of similar ages and mutually agree to engage in sexual activity, unless it involves abuse or exploitation.

Consensual kissing or other sexual touching is not illegal for those aged 13-16.

Consent

This short animated film provides a useful way of exploring what consent means for young people
www.simpleastea.com



Duty of Care

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, no young person under 13 can consent to sexual activity, however, the Act makes provision for young people of less than 16 years old, to still be offered confidential professional advice on contraception, condoms, pregnancy and termination.

A person is not guilty of aiding, abetting or counselling a sexual offence against a child where s/he is acting for the purpose of:

- Protecting a child from pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection
- Protecting the physical safety of a child
- Promoting a child's emotional wellbeing by the giving of advice

This exception, in statute, covers not only health professionals, but also anyone who acts to protect a child, for example teachers, school nurses, personal advisers, youth justice officers, youth workers, social workers and parents.

Any young person under 13 believed to be engaged in penetrative sex or sexual activity must be referred to the Customer Service Centre (where consideration is given to refer to Safeguarding and Specialist Services and possibly the Police). To ensure that both you as a worker and the young person are protected, you should speak with:

- Child Protection Nurse or
- Designated Child Protection Lead or
- Line Manager

Sexual activity involving 16-17 year olds, though unlikely to involve an offence, may still involve harm or risk of harm e.g. offences by family members, indecent photographs, pornography or prostitution.

Position of Trust

The position of trust, offences in the 2003 Sexual Offences Act covers all children under 18. They are mainly designed to protect young people aged 16 and 17 who, even though they are over the age of consent, are potentially vulnerable to sexual abuse from people in positions of trust or authority.

People who are in these positions of trust will normally have power and authority in a child's life, and may have a key influence on their future. They will have regular contact with the child, and may be acting in loco parentis.



Pornography

It is not illegal for young people under 18 to watch pornography, however if a young person is being coerced or forced to participate in viewing pornography, it may be a safeguarding issue.



Sharing Images

It is illegal to take, make, distribute/share, show or possess an indecent image of a child (someone who is, or appears to be under 18). 'Sharing' is illegal even if this is consensual between two young people, and 'possessing' includes accessing images online even if they are not saved.



Think U Know and the NCPCC have useful information on their websites for both young people and professionals on staying safe online, including the issue of sharing indecent images.





Safeguarding

Young people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, who are believed to be engaged in or planning to be engaged in, sexual activity must have their needs for health education, support and/or protection considered by the agency involved.

Services are encouraged to use the Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool designed by Brook which identifies sexual behaviours in children and young people as **GREEN**, **AMBER** or **RED**. This allows professionals across different agencies to use the same criteria when making decisions, and protect children and young people with a unified approach. Organisations must also be sure to use their own internal child protection procedures.

Fraser Guidelines

Professionals should follow the Fraser Guidelines when discussing, advising and assessing sexual matters with a young person under 16. These assert that sexual health services can be offered without consent providing that:

- The young person understands the advice that is being given
- The young person is very likely to begin or to continue having intercourse with or without contraceptive treatment
- The young person's physical or mental health or both are likely to suffer if they do not receive contraceptive treatment or advice
- It is in the young person's best interests to receive advice or treatment without parental consent
- The worker should try to persuade the young person to inform or seek support from their parents or carers, however if the young person refuses they will still receive the service they require without parental knowledge

The duty of confidentiality owed to a person under 16 years in any setting is the same as that owed to any other person, but the right to confidentiality is not absolute.

If staff are unsure about significant harm and the threshold for making a referral or which agency to refer to, they should speak to their line manager, child protection lead or contact the [Customer Service Centre 0300 123 4043](#).





Confidentiality

Confidential information is information of some sensitivity, which is not already lawfully in the public domain or readily available from another public source, and which has been shared in a relationship where the person giving the information understood that it would not be shared with others. Confidentiality is breached when the sharing of confidential information is not authorised by the person who provided it or to whom it relates.

Q: Do I have to tell anyone if a child or young person asks for information about relationships or sexual health?

A: No, children and young people have a right to confidential information on any aspect of relationships or sexual health.

Q: If a young person under 16 is sexually active can I keep it confidential?

A: A disclosure of underage sex is not in itself a reason to break confidentiality. It must be made clear from the outset that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that information may need to be shared if you think the young person or someone else is at risk of significant harm.

If you have any concern about a young person's relationship(s), you must assess the risks faced by the young person. If necessary you must discuss further with your line manager and tell the young person you are doing so. If they are over 13 but under 16 you will need to assess whether they are Fraser Competent.

It is best practice to seek consent to break confidentiality. However, if you believe the involvement of others, including the police or social care, is in their best interest, you may disclose information without consent. This should only be carried out when absolutely necessary and where possible the young person should be informed first, unless to do so could place the child at risk of harm (e.g. some children have been so successfully groomed by their perpetrator that they might 'tell' of a referral to Police or safeguarding services).

Q: Do I have to tell their parents/carers?

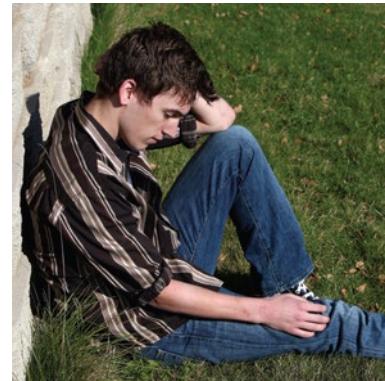
A: If they are under 16, decisions to share information with parents and carers should be taken using professional judgement of Fraser competence and in consultation with the HSCB Child Protection Procedures. Young people should be encouraged and offered support to talk to their parents/carers about their relationships and sexual health wherever it is safe to do so.

Q: Do I have to tell the police or social care?

A: Not if the relationship poses no cause for concern. If you have any concerns about the young person's sexual activity, particularly if they are under 16, you should discuss them with your line manager or child protection lead who will help you decide on the appropriate action.

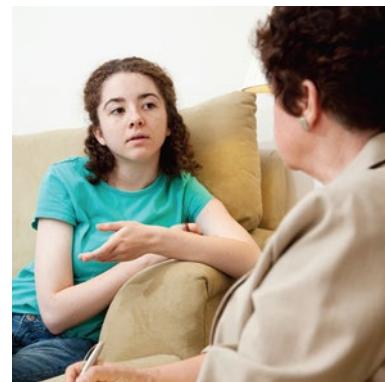
Q: What if the young person is under a care order?

A: Young people under care orders have the same right to confidentiality as other young people. Although they do not have to, the young person should be encouraged to discuss with their social worker or carer.



Q: What if a young person has a learning difficulty/disability (LDD)?

A: People with a disability who are Fraser Competent have the same right to make their own decisions as other young people. Assessing competency may take more time and they should be encouraged to talk to a parent or carer, but once assessed as Fraser Competent they have the same right to confidentiality as other young people.

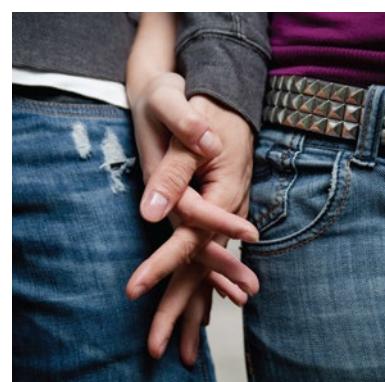


Q: Can I discuss a young person's relationships and sexual health with colleagues?

A: Information sharing must be in accordance with legal requirements and professional guidance linked to the Information Sharing and Confidentiality Procedure. www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk

Q: What if a young person discloses they have HIV or AIDS?

A: Staff should treat an HIV or AIDS disclosure by the young person as confidential medical information. Confidentiality in this context relates to maintaining privacy of information about the young person, whether this is medical information or information about their current situation. When providing services for anyone infected with or affected by HIV, confidentiality in regard to information about their illness is paramount.



Where there is a serious child protection risk to the health, safety or welfare of a child or others this outweighs her/his right to privacy.

In these circumstances professionals should act in accordance with the Child Protection Referrals Procedure.

Herts Aid is a Hertfordshire based HIV & Sexual Health Charity who provide:

HIV support services to people living with HIV, their families and carers

Clinical services including Rapid HIV testing

Educational services - training programmes covering HIV and sexual health

Ware office: 01920 484 784

Watford office: 01923 803 440



Sexual Health Interventions

Across Hertfordshire there is a full range of sexual health services offered to young people.

Services working with young people should be able to signpost young people to sexual health services. They should be aware of:

1. Local sexual health clinics offering contraception, condoms and testing and treatment for STIs.
2. The C-Card (Condom Card) scheme and how young people can access registration and pick up condoms in their area.
3. The Chlamydia screening programme and how to obtain kits or signpost young people to do a test online
4. The provision of free Emergency Contraception for young people

Sexual Health Hertfordshire

- Provides 18 sexual health clinics across Hertfordshire
- Runs the c-card scheme
- Manages the chlamydia screening programme
- Provides free Emergency Contraception
- Call: **0300 0085522** to book an appointment or ask a question
- Visit the website to view clinic times and services offered

MOGO Listings

Provides a searchable database of young people's sexual health services in Hertfordshire, including those pharmacies offering free emergency contraception and chlamydia testing.

Q: Can I give young people information about contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

A: Yes. You can provide young people with information about contraception, provided you have received up to date training to do so. However advising a young person on the suitability of a particular contraceptive method is the responsibility of health professionals.

Q: Should I promote local services?

A: Yes. It is good practice to promote local services through a variety of methods, e.g. leaflets, posters, website links displayed in youth settings, clinics and schools. It is also good practice to make contact with your local sexual health clinic, local pharmacy and Youth Connexions One Stop Shops to find out what they provide and how best to refer a young person.

Q: If I believe a young person is sexually active or likely to become so, can I encourage them to access sexual health support?

A: Yes. You should actively encourage them to visit a sexual health service to help them minimise any risk taking. If they have any worries about seeking advice you should offer appropriate support.



Q: Can I accompany an individual young person to a sexual health service?

A: Whether you can accompany them will depend on individual circumstances and the working practice of your service/department. You will need to consider, for example, your Lone Worker policy; whether you can transport young people in your car and whether you are permitted to take the young person away from the setting you are working in.

If you are able to accompany them, it is helpful to be with them in the waiting area, but you may not be able to stay with them during the consultation or examination.

If your working practice does not allow you to accompany a young person to a sexual health service it is important that you can support the young person to make contact with local services.

Q: Can sexual health support be provided within non-health settings?

A: Yes. Activities such as STI testing and condom distribution can often be delivered in non-health settings. This can be a successful way of taking sexual health support to young people who are reluctant to visit or who cannot access more formal services. However, testing for the full range of STIs is only currently available through sexual health clinics.





Contraception and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Information about contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment can be found at www.nhs.uk and search for Sexual Health.

The My Contraception Tool from the Family Planning Association is a useful questionnaire for helping young people to choose which contraceptive method might suit them best.



Q: Can I provide condoms to young people?

A: Services are entitled to give condoms to young people, including under 16s, for education or contraceptive purposes. This should always be in the context of helping them to resist pressures to have unwanted sex and to delay sex until they feel ready and confident to make informed choices. Information on STI's, other forms of contraception and access to Chlamydia screening should also be discussed. If you are working with an external agency, the issuing of condoms should be discussed prior to any work undertaken.

Good practice would be to work within Hertfordshire C-Card (Condom Card) scheme. The C-Card scheme allows young people to access confidential sexual health advice and free condoms at designated outlets across Hertfordshire. It aims to improve acceptability of condom use and increase accessibility to free condoms and lube within a confidential and non judgemental service.

C-card Outlets

To find the nearest C-Card outlet visit: Sexual Health Hertfordshire and search for c-card

Q: Can I encourage young people to use Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)?

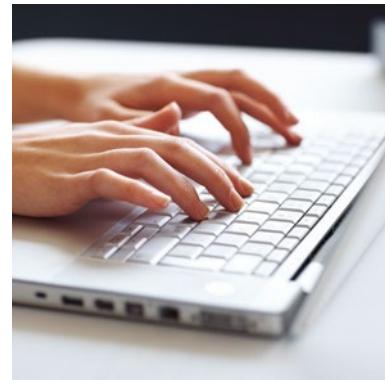
A: LARC are contraceptive methods that don't rely on you having to remember to take anything and are ideal if you don't want to become pregnant for a while. They include the contraceptive implant, contraceptive injection and the IUD (coil). Young people are encouraged to consider these options, but must be reminded that condoms are the only method that prevent STIs.



Q: What is Emergency Contraception?

A: Emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) is an option if the young person has had unprotected sex (UPSI) within the last 5 days:

- Levonelle is licensed up to 72 hours after UPSI and is effective up to 96 hours, but giving it between 72 and 96 hours is unlicensed. The efficacy reduces over time and it is best taken within 24 hours
- ellaOne is effective up to 5 days, so a young person who has had UPSI between 72 and 120hrs could be given ellaOne



The most effective method of emergency contraception is an emergency coil and this potentially has a wider window of use depending on the part of the cycle in which the UPSI occurred. Young people should be made aware of this option and signposted to contraception services if they wish to consider it.

A young person who has had UPSI should be encouraged to have a sexual health screen



Free EHC for young people

Over 80 Hertfordshire pharmacies provide free EHC to the under 25s. To search for the nearest one, use www.mogolistings.org

Q: Can I provide Chlamydia testing on site?

A: Only staff who have completed Chlamydia screening training should distribute Chlamydia screening kits to young people they work with. Alternatively, staff can signpost young people to local sexual health clinics, pharmacies, GP practices or One Stop Shops where they will be able to get a Chlamydia screening kit or help them order a kit online via Sexual Health Hertfordshire. They can also order a free, confidential kit online via C-Sure.



Pregnancy

Q: Can I help a young person with a pregnancy test?

A: If a young person thinks they or their partner may be pregnant you can:

- Provide details of sexual health services
- Accompany them to a sexual health service if appropriate
- Provide a pregnancy test if you have completed the appropriate training



Q: How can I support a young person who is pregnant or her partner?

A: Once a pregnancy is confirmed staff may need to work with other agencies to ensure that the young woman receives unbiased information and advice on termination, adoption or becoming a parent. If the decision is to continue the pregnancy, advice on what this will entail before and after the birth will be provided.

Any girl under 13 who is pregnant must be referred to the **Customer Service Centre 0300 123 4040**.

Any girl under 16 who is pregnant must be offered specialist support and guidance.

Staff can:

- Help them access information on their options at a Youth Connexions One Stop Shop or a local clinic.
- Offer opportunities for them to explore their feelings
- Support them to tell their parents/carers, if this is an issue
- Encourage them to see their GP or refer them to a School Nurse as soon as possible in order to access maternity services
- Contact the local maternity service to ensure they have been referred to a specialist teenage pregnancy/vulnerable women midwife (West Herts: 01923 244366, East Herts: 01438 314333)
- Ensure that the young person is aware of opportunities to continue their education where appropriate

The pregnancy of a partner can be a difficult time for a young father and they may need support in addressing their role and responsibilities. This is especially important if the young woman is making decisions that the father does not agree with. Staff need to discuss with the father what his needs are and make appropriate referrals as necessary.

Q: Can any young woman under 16 have a termination?

A: All under 16's will have face to face counselling with the termination provider prior to any discussion about treatment choices. If she still wishes to terminate her pregnancy a consultation with a doctor will establish whether or not the correct conditions are in place to comply with the Abortion Act.

Q: Can a young woman under 16 have a termination without parental consent?

A: This decision can only be made by health professionals who will need to be satisfied that the young woman is fully Fraser Competent.

Q: Can a young woman have a termination without having to pay?

A: Yes, it's FREE. Clinical Commissioning Groups in Hertfordshire fund comprehensive termination of pregnancy: counselling; treatment; post-treatment contraception and post-treatment counselling services for its patients. Therefore no payment is necessary from the patient.

Q: Where do I find out more about termination to help young people?

A: You can speak to either Marie Stopes or BPAS for professional-to-professional advice and guidance. If it's specific guidance for a young person that you are looking for, it may be best to provide a referral to Marie Stopes or BPAS as they are best qualified to support and provide advice. Remember a referral does not mean certain termination.

Termination Services

**Marie Stopes UK: www.mariestopes.org.uk
0345 300 8090 (24 hours)**

**British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)
www.bpas.org.uk Booking line only
03457 30 40 30**

Q: What support should I offer to a young person after a termination?

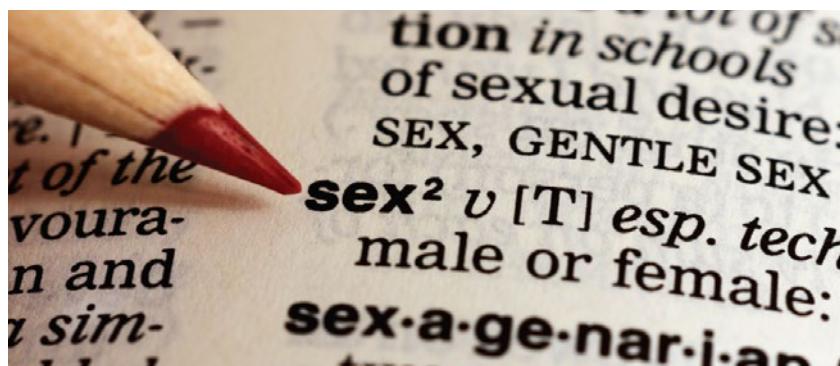
A: You should offer opportunities for them to explore their feelings, and signpost them to local services providing counselling support if required. You should also encourage them to decide on the contraception they want to use in the future, including whether long acting reversible contraception (LARC) might work for them.





Providing Relationships and Sexual Health Advice

The provision of relationship and sexual health information and advice should adhere to the values and behaviours as mentioned on page 4 of this document. It should reflect the child's or young person's age, existing knowledge, beliefs, experiences, understanding and level of maturity.



Information given to young people should always be in the context of helping them to resist pressures to have unwanted sex and to delay sex until they feel ready and confident to make informed choices.

Services working with young people should be aware of the following local sources of advice and support:

CHAT HEALTH

A confidential School Nurse messaging service where young people can text 07480 635050 to ask for advice on a range of health issues including sex and relationships.

YOUTH CONNEXIONS

Youth Connexions Advisors can provide information and advice to young people on sexual health and relationships on a drop-in basis at One Stop Shops and Youth Centres.

SCHOOL NURSES

School nurses can provide professionals and young people with information and advice on sexual health and relationships, once a referral form has been completed. Visit the website to find the contact details of your local team.

SEXUAL HEALTH HERTFORDSHIRE

Can provide information about sexual health issues and services available in Hertfordshire.

Q: What should I do if a young person has questions about gender or sexuality?

A: When talking to a young person make sure you provide impartial information and do not make any assumptions about them. Remind young people that services in Hertfordshire are positively inclusive in terms of gender and sexual orientation. You may want to provide them with information on the services above, or visit www.youngprideinherts.org



Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

Sex and relationships education (SRE) is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to have safe, fulfilling relationships, to enjoy their sexuality and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being.

According to the [Sex Education Forum](#), good quality SRE should:

- Be accurate and factual covering a comprehensive range of information about sex, relationships and sexual health.
- Be positively inclusive in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, culture, age, faith, belief, HIV status, pregnancy or other life-experience
- Be respectful of the realities in which children and young people live so that no-one is disadvantaged because of their family or community background
- Include the development of skills that enable personal responsibility, support healthy relationships and ensure good communication about sex and relationships
- Promote a critical awareness of different social and peer norms and values
- Nurture the development of clear values based on mutual respect and care
- Ensure that children and young people are clearly informed about where they can get confidential advice and support

To ensure SRE meets the needs of children and young people it should:

- Start early in childhood and continue throughout life
- Be provided within a learning environment which is safe for the children, young people and adults involved and should help young people understand that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable
- Actively involve children and young people as participants, evaluators and advocates in developing good quality provision
- Be provided in partnership by schools, parents, carers and communities
- Be taught by trained and competent educators

Hertfordshire Grid for Learning
provides resources on the delivery of SRE,
including local training and support.

Q: Does my school have to teach SRE?

A: All schools are strongly encouraged to teach SRE. Schools are required to have a SRE policy but the actual teaching of SRE is not currently a statutory requirement. The 2014 supplementary guidance on SRE summarises the responsibilities for schools around SRE in more detail.

Q: How should I teach about issues like sexting, pornography and abuse in relationships?

A: The 2014 supplementary guidance on SRE contains the latest advice on how to cover these topics, and provides signposting to resources on teaching SRE more generally.

This checklist summarises the key issues that need to be considered in the process of delivering a planned SRE programme:

- If you are working with an external agency, have you devised a joint working agreement?
- Are you aware of the external agencies own policies and procedures e.g. child protection and condom distribution?
- Has parental consent be obtained where necessary?
- Are sufficient time and resources set aside to plan the work?
- Have you considered how you will create a safe environment for sharing information?
- Have you planned how you can ensure support for young people if they disclose personal information about themselves or others?
- Have you assessed the young people's needs based on age, existing knowledge, beliefs, experiences, understanding and level of maturity?
- Have you prioritised key topics in line with your assessment of young people's needs?
- Have you considered what methods you will use to engage young people and create optimum opportunities for participation?
- Have you identified appropriate resources to help plan your work?
- Have you planned how you will assess and evaluate the work undertaken?
- Do you need to access training to increase your knowledge on this subject?
- Are you familiar with child protection procedures and how they relate to relationships and sexual health work?
- Have you explored opportunities for working in partnership, with relevant specialist agencies to offer ongoing support to young people?

SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION (SRE)





Child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act. This could be as part of a relationship which seems to be normal and loving or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay.

Q: What are the signs?

A: Often, the victims of sexual exploitation are not aware that they are being exploited. Sometimes, a victim may think they won't be believed. However, there are a number of telltale signs that include:

- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or not taking part in education
- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections
- mood swings or changes in emotional wellbeing
- drug and alcohol misuse
- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- changes in eating patterns

Q: What should I do if I think a young person is being sexually exploited?

A: If in doubt, seek advice or make a referral about your concern by contacting: Children's Services (including out of hours) on 0300 123 4043. You can also contact Herts Constabulary on non-emergency Tel: 101 who run Operation HALO, aiming to identify cases of child sexual exploitation in Hertfordshire and prosecute offenders. If you fear a child is in immediate danger, call 999 or contact your local police. For further guidance on sexual exploitation please visit: www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk

Training

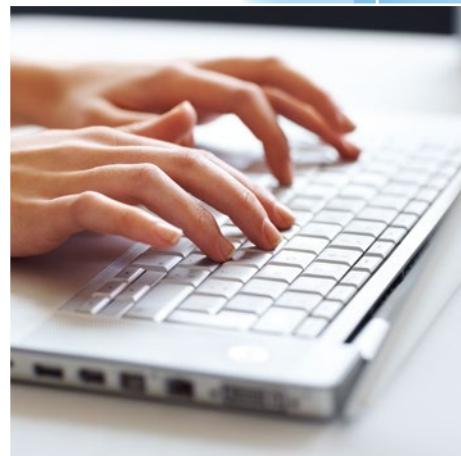
It is recommended that all professionals working with young people in Hertfordshire are trained on sexual health and relationships.

For details on upcoming training courses in Hertfordshire, please contact:

workforcedevelopment.FamiliesFirst@hertfordshire.gov.uk

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION / TRAINING





This toolkit has been produced jointly by
Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust.
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Hertfordshire Community **NHS**
NHS Trust