

## Health Improvement Team (Sexual Health)

### Annual Report 2020-21

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## Introduction

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I am very proud of all my colleagues in the Health Improvement Team for Sexual Health. Our team has always been hardworking, enthusiastic, creative, adaptable, and kept each other motivated with cheerful good humour and great peer support. This year we benefitted from these qualities during a year when we all needed them more than ever before.

Our experience was no different to that of most other teams this year. As with all non-patient facing staff within the NHS our team worked from home during the course of the year. The team was fortunate in already being largely agile and mostly able to keep working once the stay at home instruction was given. Inevitably there have been challenges ranging from getting hold of equipment for home working, problems with IT connectivity, adapting to conducting all business on a screen, trying to work while home schooling or caring for vulnerable or sick relatives and keeping our motivation up. We certainly all “hit the wall” at various points in the year and managed to support each other to keep going as best as we could.

Those programmes of work that could continue were adapted, while others were reduced or paused. Some members of the team were reassigned to support the “Test and Protect service” reducing the capacity of the team. The teams and services we work in partnership were likewise affected with staff either reassigned or prioritising emergency responses.

However we were all very aware that the population we work for, were experiencing enormous challenges to their health and wellbeing and that as well as providing reactive information, services and signposting, it was important to be thinking about future needs and to begin shaping programmes of work for recovery.

Therefore like every other annual report for the year 2020/21, this report provides a summary of what the team was able to deliver during the year of the COVID 19 pandemic while attempting to keep working through fluctuating periods of restrictions. This inevitably means the report is less about quantity and more about what we did to adapt and keep going.

But for me this report is really all about our team - Alison, Elaine, Hazel-ann, Jacinta, Jill, Jo, Julian, Laurel, Robina and Scott.

Nicky Coia  
Health Improvement Manager (Sexual Health) July 2021

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## Case study- Improving Relationships and Sexual Health in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde during COVID 19

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The team held it's first (but not last!) virtual discursive event in August 2020 to re-engage with key stakeholders and partners. The event was designed to reconnect with organisation and services across the health board, to flag up what we knew about the population's sexual health and wellbeing at a time when services were very restricted and what the likely impacts of restricted service provision would be. It gave us a chance to check what we were experiencing chimed with what colleagues in a wide range of services were also experiencing.

We were able to share what our thinking was about adapting our health improvement programme to online ways of working and check with those present if this was along the right lines for their services, staff and clients.

We were pleased that around 40 staff attended from across the six HSCPs, local authorities, and third sector partners and that the event gave us a good grounding on which to adapt our delivery programme.

### Examples of feedback

I thoroughly enjoyed this event, really well executed and engaging. Lots of food for thought about how we join forces to ensure that we meet the health and wellbeing needs of our GGC population with the resources we have. Well done to all involved in bringing this event together.

Really grateful to you for such an insightful session. Speakers were very clear and enjoyed the strength based, solution focused culture of the session. Nicky chaired the session very well. Thank you for continuing to include FNP in these events as makes such a difference to be connected and work together to best support the families we work with.

### Examples of chat during session

I think we need to look at a menu based approach and integrate MH, Drugs and Alcohol alongside sexual health as well as vulnerable groups

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## HIV Prevention: Gay and Bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM)

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### Understanding the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns on GBMSM

Working in partnership with NHS Lothian we support Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) to undertake the triennial Social Media, Men and Sexual and Holistic Health study (SMMASH3) a national online survey which investigates GBMSM health beliefs and behaviours. Allowing us to routinely expand and update our local evidence base of GBMSM's health and wellbeing including risk of HIV transmission and harm reduction strategies.

Working collaboratively with other NHS Boards, GCU and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector we moved quickly to adapt SMMASH3 to investigate the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on GBMSM helping design and deliver the SMMASH-Pan study. GBMSM as a population experience poorer mental, sexual and wider health problems than the rest of society. SMMASH-Pan examined how COVID-19 related lockdowns affected GBMSM and how they adapted to online service delivery during the pandemic.

Initial SMMASH-Pan findings are helping inform the creation of recommendations to reduce barriers and build facilitators to enable services to meet unmet mental health needs and boost GBMSM mental health help-seeking behaviour in response to the impact of COVID-19. The research will also help inform our teams work programme as we start to plan beyond the immediate pandemic.

### Collaborating to adapt to COVID-19 challenges

The 'MSM Masterclass' was a national NHS training resource established in 2014 to enable individual and professional reflection and learning to support service improvement. We have led a national partnership to update the resource in light of advances in HIV prevention and in response to COVID-19.

Following a review of the training materials and a survey of sexual health services across Scotland it was recognised the MSM Masterclass is highly valued, but the course structure and content require revision. Furthermore COVID-19 and the associated changes to working arrangements presented an opportunity to completely modernise course structure and delivery. We are collaborating with NHS boards and third sector partners to develop a completely new 3 tiered course structure to facilitate learning for staff with varying levels of subject knowledge.

The move to an online blended learning model, a mix of self-directed online learning combined with online facilitated group sessions, ensures a greater degree of flexibility in future course delivery. These changes combined with Public Health Scotland hosting the resource on their virtual learning environment website should lead to a broader mix of staff groups who could benefit from the training having access to training at the right level for their role in the public health workforce. The finished resource is on schedule to be launched in the latter half of 2021.

## Free Condoms Service COVID-19 Experience

The Free Condoms Service (FCS) contributes to Sandyford's key outcome to address the sexual and reproductive health needs of people living with or at risk of acquiring HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and people at risk of unintended conception. The service is available to anyone aged 13 years and over who lives, works or studies within NHSGCC.

In March 2020 we had a network of 535 venues distributing products on behalf of the service. The venues are physical locations where condoms and lubricant are available to collect free of charge. The venues are mainly pharmacies, health clinics, student accommodation, bars/clubs and partner agencies in both statutory and non-statutory sectors.

When the COVID-19 lockdown was introduced the majority of FCS venues had to close or provide a restricted service, thus reducing access to condoms and lubricant for priority groups and the wider population of NHSGCC.



In order to continue provision of condoms and lubricant, we introduced a new service delivery model: Free Condoms by post. Service users can order up to three bags of products directly via the [freecondoms.scot](https://www.freecondoms.scot) website for postal delivery. This reduced the need for face-to-face contact while maintaining access to the service.

During the early phase of lockdown the postal service operated alongside the venues that remained open to the public, which were predominantly pharmacies. We communicated these changes to the public with adverts on a range of digital platforms and via the Free Condoms, Sandyford and partner's websites and social media channels.

This service has positively contributed to sexual health provision over the course of the lockdown. Over the last 12 months the service has processed 7,858 orders, providing service users with products directly to their door.

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## Children and Young People

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### COVID-19 challenges

For part of the past business year the C&YP team was operating with reduced capacity due to staff redeployment to Test and Protect. Additional challenges posed by IT and home schooling faced by the C&YP team required us to re-focus our business plan solely on the key priorities for action during 2020/21

### Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHP)

March 2020 saw the closure of schools and early year's establishments and a move to home schooling. During this time the [national resource for Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood](#) which the team has lead responsibility for, continued to see consistent visits with 58,581 recorded visits and a total of 324,984 page views.

The C&YP team collated and shared materials to support parents/carers to deliver key messages during this period of home schooling.

During 2020/21 the process to translate the entire national resource into Gaelic was started and this is due to be completed by August 2021.

In December 2020 we commissioned the development of a national resource for children and young people with complex and severe learning needs. This work is currently underway and will sit within the existing material at [www.rshp.scot](http://www.rshp.scot)

As schools began a phased return in August 2020, prior to another national lockdown, we identified priorities for a recovery/reconnect curriculum and provided 3 national network updates with a focus on ['Mental and Emotional Health'](#), ['Sexual Health'](#) and ['Online Support'](#).

### Training

Covid 19 restrictions, and depleted capacity within the team, required adaptations to training provision to partner organisations. A cross-team approach was taken to developing materials that could be delivered virtually to a range of key partners. Our priority partner organisations included Early Years, GCC Intensive Services and Families for Children. We provided training for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) across NHS GG&C, with 394 being trained Jan-March 2021.

## Responding to Young People's sexual health needs

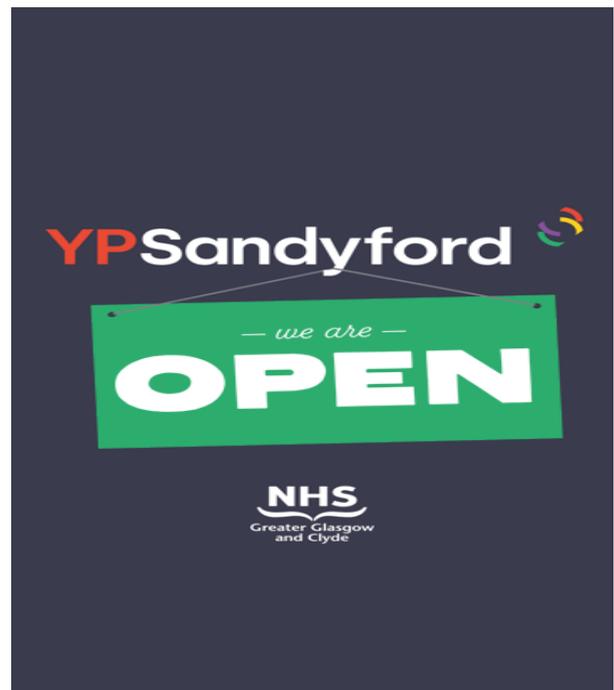
We worked with Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and colleagues from NHS Lothian to develop a national campaign for young people to encourage them to access services, if they needed them. This was driven by concerns about young people being sexually active during lockdown and not accessing services for fear of being in trouble.

We developed a very short animation that clicked through to a campaign page on NHS Inform with sexual health and pregnancy information and a service finder tool- [www.nhsinform.scot/ypsexualhealth](http://www.nhsinform.scot/ypsexualhealth). The first phase of this campaign ran from 27<sup>th</sup> July until 10<sup>th</sup> August with very good engagement on social media platforms and 1,960 unique views of the campaign page. We ran the campaign again throughout December, as more areas entered Level 4 restrictions which resulted in 5,055 unique views of the campaign page.

## Service development

We worked with our colleagues in the clinical young people's team to promote the restricted clinical services that remained open. Our attendance figures increased as a result of targeted social media campaigns and support from colleagues in youth organisations.

We were also able to start to implement some of the planned Sandyford services changes. We worked with our clinical colleagues to open a new clinic in Port Glasgow and to source a suitable venue for Saturday afternoon clinics for young people in Glasgow City Centre.



## Research

The CONUNDRUM research project was commissioned in 2019 by the HI SH team, in partnership with NHS Lothian, Lanarkshire and the Scottish Government. The research sought to provide insight into the social context shaping use and non-use of condoms and contraception among young people in Scotland.



The study was conducted by researchers from the University of Glasgow who adapted their approaches to enable the continuation of the study throughout the past year of COVID-19 restrictions.

Co-developed with over 100 sexual health stakeholders, CONUNDRUM draws together views and experiences of more than 2000 young people across Scotland.

The study found that:

- In sexual partnerships where pregnancy is possible, unintended conceptions appear to be of greater concern to young people than contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- “Pulling out” (i.e. withdrawal) was reported by many young people, despite widespread awareness that it is not an effective method of STI or pregnancy prevention.
- While many young people reportedly turn to official healthcare sources (e.g. NHS websites, GPs, nurses) for accurate information on condoms and contraception, they do not always trust that they will receive the most honest input (e.g. on side effects) from these sources.
- Many young people indicate preference for free condom services that require minimal face-to-face contact, with online ordering of condoms posted home by far the favoured option across all genders.

We worked with the study team to design an additional question about the impact of COVID-19 on young people’s experiences of accessing and using condoms and contraception during those early months of the pandemic. Approximately one quarter of young people who use condoms or contraception said that COVID-19 had impacted their access or use in those months, and hundreds of young people opted to describe their experiences in more detail by writing in an open text box. The data from this questions was [published as a paper in the BMJ](#). The full report, its executive summary and the COVID -19 paper are available on the CONUNDRUM [project page](#).