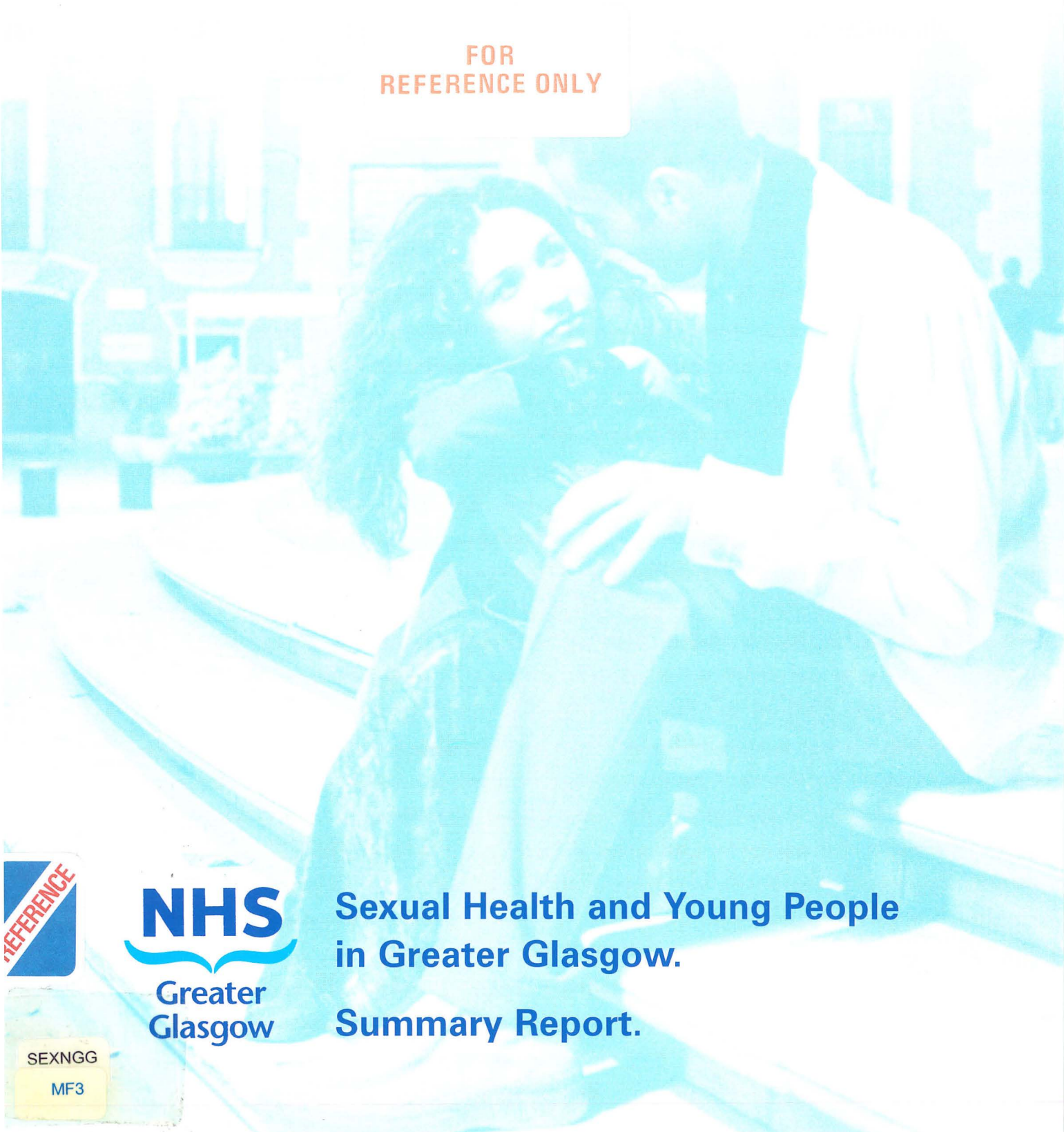


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# Sex in the City

FOR  
REFERENCE ONLY



REFERENCE



**Sexual Health and Young People  
in Greater Glasgow.  
Summary Report.**

SEXNGG  
MF3

# Sexual Health Needs Assessment of young people in Greater Glasgow

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## Introduction

Greater Glasgow Health Board's Health Promotion Department conducted a survey of the behaviour, knowledge and access to information of young people (aged 16-21) in Glasgow. This survey had two stages. Firstly, a self-complete questionnaire was distributed at places around Glasgow including colleges and universities, training organisations, health centres, certain employers, youth clubs and other youth organisations. Questionnaires were also issued to young people attending particular events. Secondly, a street survey was carried out by interviewers using a shortened version of the questionnaire. The characteristics of the young people who took part are in table 1. The findings reported here are based on the self-complete questionnaire, unless marked with an asterisk which indicates the findings from both surveys.

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## Decision to have sex

Around 80% of young people have had sex - 79% of young men and 83% of young women. The proportion of young people who have had sex increases with age; from 54% of the 16 years olds to 93% of the 21 year olds. Ninety five percent of those young people reported having had penetrative sex (defined as penis penetrating the vagina or anus of another person). The reasons for deciding to have sex were various; 80% of young men and 64% of young women were curious and wanted to try sex and 16% felt in love with their partner or felt ready to have sex on their first time. Around one fifth of young people, similar for men and women, felt some kind of pressure to have

sex for the first time. This could have been peer pressure from a partner, a belief that all their friends had 'done it', or a feeling that they had to prove something to themselves by having sex. The majority, 71%, of young people were in a relationship when they first had sex. Ten percent of young men report feelings of regret at having sex on their first time, whilst 24 % of young women were regretful.

Amongst the young people who have not had sex, most young women gave reasons based on personal choice not to have, whilst most young men reported lack of opportunity or that a partner did not want to have sex.

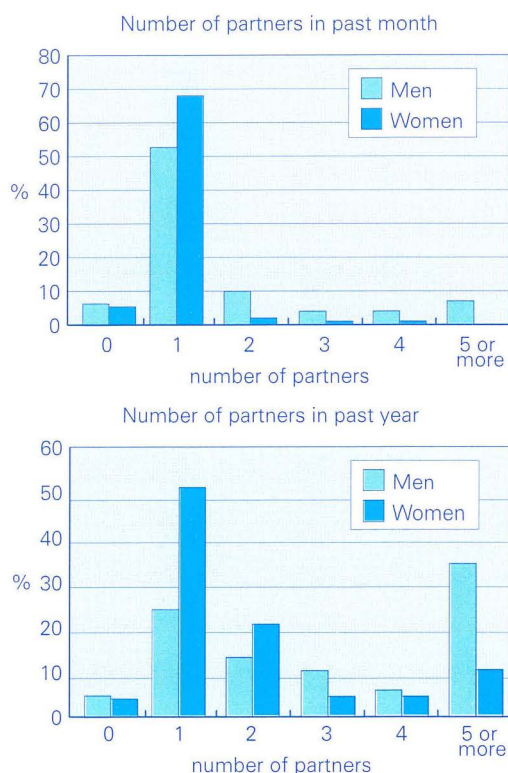
**Table 1:**  
**Respondents to the self complete survey and the street survey**

	Self complete survey (n=259)		Street survey (n=264)		Total (n=523)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	89	34	135	51	224	43
Female	161	62	129	49	290	55
Don't know	9	4	0	0	9	2
<b>Age</b>						
16	37	14	59	22	96	18
17	26	11	56	21	82	16
18	65	25	29	11	94	18
19	39	15	25	10	64	12
20	45	17	31	12	76	15
21	30	12	64	24	94	18
Don't know	15	6	0	0	15	3
<b>Occupation</b>						
Full time paid work	28	11	92	35	120	23
Part time paid work	15	6	19	7	34	7
Full time education	179	69	73	28	252	48
Part time education	0	0	16	6	16	3
Government training	3	1	5	2	8	2
Unemployed	14	5	48	18	62	12
Long term sick/disabled	2	1	5	2	7	1
Other	5	2	6	2	11	2
Don't know	13	5	0	0	13	2
<b>Ethnic origin</b>						
White	240	93	-	-	-	-
Indian*	2	1	-	-	-	-
Pakistani*	1	1	-	-	-	-
Black*	1		-	-	-	-
Chinese*	1		-	-	-	-
Other*	1		-	-	-	-
Don't know	13	5	-	-	-	-
<b>Sexuality</b>						
Opposite sex partner	212	82	-	-	-	-
Gay or lesbian	6	2	-	-	-	-
Bisexual	4	2	-	-	-	-
Unsure	6	2	-	-	-	-
Has sex with same sex partners	3	1	-	-	-	-
Don't know	28	11	-	-	-	-

\*Figures do not add up due to rounding.

## Sexual behaviour

For both young men and women the most common number of sexual partners over the past month is none or one. Young women reported mostly one or two partners over the past year, whilst young men were more likely to report a higher number of partners over the past year, with 36% reported having 5 or more partners.



## Use of contraception

### On the first time

Seventy four percent of the young people reported using contraception on their first sexual encounter: condom (84%), the pill (5%), or a combination of condom and the pill (11%). 39% of the young people reported being under the influence of drink when having sex for the first time and 5% were under the influence of drugs. However, this only marginally lowered the use of contraception as 69% reported using contraception under the influence of drink or drugs on their first time.

Fifty nine percent of young women and 40% of young men were worried about pregnancy

when they first had sex and over half of the young people (54%) who had used contraception on their first time were still worried about pregnancy. Of those that were not worried about pregnancy, most had used contraception. However a minority of other young people showed lack of forethought, ignorance and apathy towards contraception.

Twenty percent of young people were worried about catching a sexually transmitted infection (STI) when they first had sex. Most of the young people who were not worried about STIs had used condoms. However a small minority of young people reported that they had not thought about STIs.

### In relationships

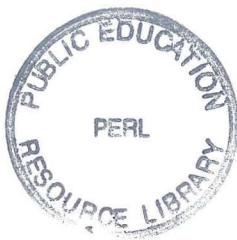
Just under half, 45%, of young people were currently in a sexual relationship, with 83% of these having penetrative sex and 82% using contraception. Hormonal contraception (pill, implants or injections) was the most commonly used contraception for young people in relationships: 42% hormonal contraception, 35% condom, 20% combined hormone and condom, 3% other.

Most of the young people reported considered decision-making with regard to their chosen contraception, giving reasons like 'reliability' and 'most comfortable'.

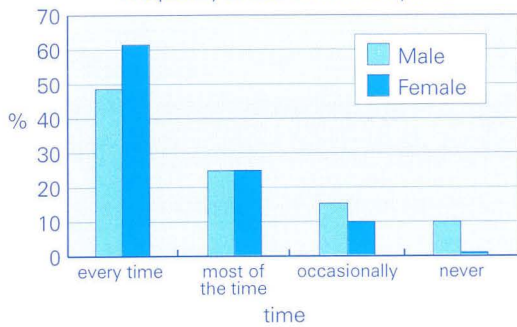
### Ongoing contraception choices

Young people reported varying methods of contraception over time: 44% have used hormonal contraception, 47% have used a condom or femidom and 30% have used combined methods. However, 20% reported not using contraception on occasions and more young men reported not using contraception than young women.

As opposed to those having sex for the first time, for young people in relationships, alcohol or drugs had a negative influence on the ongoing use of contraception with one quarter reporting that they are less likely to use contraception when under the influence. Again, this was reported more frequently by men than women.



Frequency of use of contraception



### Emergency contraception

About half of the young people (or their partner) having sex have used emergency contraception. Over 70% indicated they would get emergency contraception from the GP or family planning clinic. One third or less of young people would get emergency contraception from the following places: pharmacist, chemist, The Place<sup>1</sup>, casualty, Boots drop-in for young people, GUM clinic. Sixty eight percent of young men and women would like to be able to access emergency contraception over the counter at the chemist.

More young men than young women preferred this than accessing emergency contraception from a GP.

### Knowledge about contraception

- 19% of men and 10% of women believed that hormone contraception would protect them from sexually transmitted infections
- young women are more likely to know the time period for which emergency contraception is effective
- about half of young people know when a woman is most at risk of becoming pregnant

<sup>1</sup>The Place is the young people's service at the Sandyford Initiative.

### Pregnancy

- 79% of young people reported worrying about pregnancy with slightly more young women (85%) worrying than young men (73%)
- 26 young people had experienced pregnancy (men were asked about their female partners)
- Of these, 2 people had been pregnant twice, with 11 terminations, 7 miscarriages and 10 having babies
- 6 of these pregnancies were planned.
- 15 young people specified where they had asked for help and advice
- 19 reported that they had received the support they had required.
- sources of help and advice used when pregnant were, family planning clinic (7), other health service (6), family (2), telephone helpline (1)

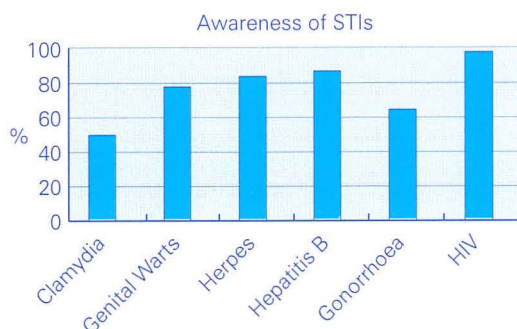
### Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Around 40% of young people were concerned about STIs. Most of these were worried in general; a small minority had experienced symptoms. Only one third of those (n=36) worried had sought help from an agency. The most popular place for help was the GP. Most of the young people who had sought help were satisfied with the help received, only six were not, who felt that the service could have been more understanding and less judgemental.

Twenty eight of the young people believed they were at risk from HIV, the proportion was slightly higher for young men than young women. However, only nine of the young people had been tested for HIV, 7 women and 2 men. Seventeen had thought themselves to be vulnerable to Chlamydia and had been tested, again more women (13) than men (4).

### Awareness of STIs\*

There was a broad awareness of different STIs amongst young people. This awareness was similar across genders, with one exception; young women had heard of Chlamydia more often than young men. More young women (85%) than young men (74%) thought that STIs do not always have detectable symptoms.



### Cervical Smears

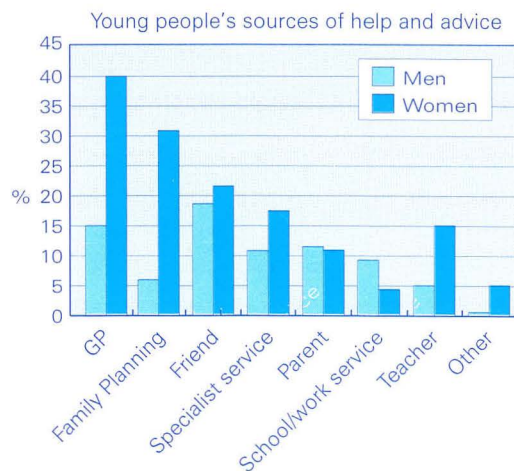
- 87% of young women report knowing about smear tests and the reason for having them done
- only 30% have had a smear test done, with 37% being invited to do so by the GP.
- those who haven't had a smear test were either uncomfortable with the procedure or had not seen a reason to have one done.

### Sexual Health Services

#### Use of sexual health services

Young women had a much higher use of services and advice sources than young men: 58% of young men had not sought advice about their sexual health from anyone or any service whilst only 30% of young women had not. Of those who had sought advice, around 90% believed they had received the help and advice they were looking for. The few who felt dissatisfied with the service commented that they felt uncomfortable with the doctor (GP, FPC and SH clinic), that it took too long

to get an appointment or the service was slow once there. Of those that made suggestions about improvements to the services, most wanted the services to be more understanding, less patronising and with easier access.



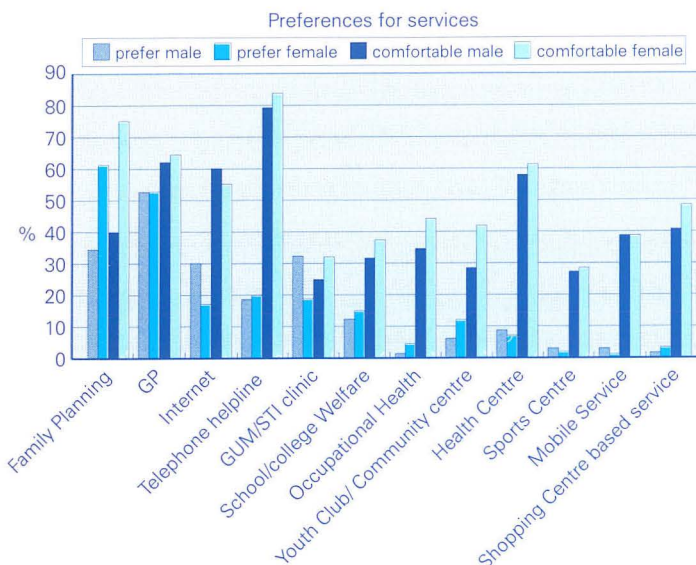
For both young men and women there was low use of the specialist sexual health services, including those specifically run for young people. In the graph above the specialist services include; GUM clinic, sexual health clinic, The Place, Boots drop in clinic, centre for women's health, Steve Retson Project and the lesbian health service.

\*Very few of the young people had heard of The Place, a sexual health service for young people at the Sandyford Initiative. Twenty three percent of the questionnaire respondents and only 1% of the street survey respondents had heard of it. It is encouraging that those who had attended the service gave very positive feedback about the service and their experience there, with the only criticism being that it was not publicised enough!

Although, as will be seen later, young people like the idea of telephone and internet based services for help and advice, when asked how they would prefer to discuss sexual health issues, overwhelmingly, they preferred the face to face contact of a visit to a sexual health service.

## Preference for Sexual Health Services\*

Whilst young people have shown limited use of specialist services when they have been seeking help and advice with a sexual health problem, more detail is given with an examination of their preference for and expressed comfort with a range of services.



The preference shown for services in the above graph indicates the services which the young people had used or felt likely to use. Family planning clinics, especially for young women, and the GP remain popular. Young men also expressed a preference for GUM clinics. The comfort with services indicates where young people think they would feel at ease using a service. The picture is different from the preference for services and along with the use of services probably indicates young people have low awareness of the wide range of services available to them. They clearly express an interest in alternative range of services, particularly telephone helplines, the internet and services at health centres.

## Role of sexual health services\*

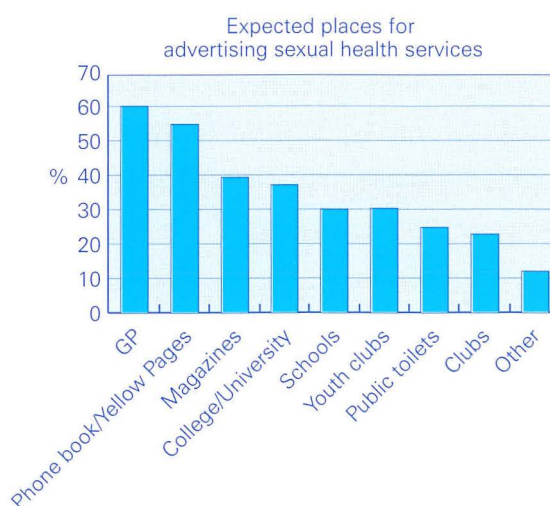
Of the listed roles of sexual health services at least 50% or above of young people saw a need for a range of roles; general discussion about sex, contraception services, information, testing and treatment for STIs, testing for pregnancy, counselling, cervical smear screening, terminations, and advice /help with relationships and sexuality. Young men and women had similar ideas about the role of sexual health services, with the only differences being that young women saw greater need for services to provide pregnancy testing, contraception and cervical smear testing.

## Access to Sexual Health Services\*

Young people clearly wanted flexibility about access times to sexual health services with over half indicating weekend and evening opening would be useful.

## Publicising and promoting sexual health services\*

Young people expressed preferences for where they thought sexual health services should be advertised. The GP was the most popular, along with the Phone Book or Yellow Pages. The other suggestions made by young people included the internet, newspapers, health centres, and television.



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www.nhsggc.org.uk/perl

### *Attitudes to sexual health services\**

When asked what they thought going to a sexual health clinic would be like, of those who expressed an opinion, nearly half thought it would be a negative experience. They thought it would be unnerving, embarrassing, awkward or judgemental. The remainder thought the experience would be more positive using words like, helpful/understanding, relaxed/comfortable, friendly, non-judgemental.

The most frequently made comment about the use of sexual health services was that

they should be publicised more effectively and made more accessible. There was concern amongst young people that they would be judged by using sexual health services. Many young people expressed a preference for informal services run specifically for young people and some preferred a younger age of staff at such services. There was also a group of people who had not used the services because they felt they had not needed to do so. For instance, they had not been concerned that they required treatment for a sexual health problem.

## **Conclusions**

This survey was able to include a wide sample of young people across Greater Glasgow and found that:

- the majority of young people are having sexual relationships
- a significant minority felt pressure to have sex or were regretful after having sex for the first time
- young men report a higher number of partners over the past year
- condoms are the most popular contraception choice on the first sexual encounter; hormone contraception is the most popular choice for ongoing sexual relationships
- a minority of young people show ignorance or apathy towards contraception
- alcohol or drugs influences the use of contraception on an ongoing basis, but not on the first sexual encounter
- there are gaps in knowledge about contraception and STIs, especially for young men
- young people would prefer to access emergency contraception over the counter at a chemist
- 10% of young people had experienced pregnancy
- few young people had experienced symptoms of STIs
- young people have a limited knowledge and a low use of sexual health services, especially those specifically for young people, e.g. The Place
- there is a willingness to use sexual health services
- young people have a preference for telephone and internet based services
- they also would like a wide range of services provided with flexible access
- a significant minority have negative attitudes towards sexual health services

Thanks to Lucy Simons, Nicky Coia, Phil White, Fiona Dobbie and TL Dempster  
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