

C-Card Parents / Carers Information

The C-Card Scheme offers access to free condoms and information and support about sexual health for people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

The Scheme is delivered in sexual health clinics and in a range of community venues such as schools, colleges, pharmacies and universities, supporting people in reducing sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

There are over 150 venues across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland which allow people to visit the site in which they feel most comfortable and so increases the likelihood of them accessing condoms when they need to.

It is a confidential service which also offers information and advice about healthy relationships and an opportunity for young people to share any concerns they have and to access support if they are at risk of abuse or exploitation.

We understand that some parents and carers may have questions about the C-Card Scheme- below our team answers some of the most common ones that are asked:

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

Yes, the way that C-Card condoms are provided to under 16's is legal. When a young person is registered for a C-Card, the registration conversation will be carried out by a trained practitioner who will assess the young person's understanding and competence according to national guidelines called "Fraser" guidelines.

To be deemed "Fraser competent" a young person must be capable of understanding all of the information given and of making an informed choice. The Fraser Guidelines were developed specifically to address confidential delivery of sexual health and contraception services to under 16's and provide a legal framework for practitioners. Young people under 16 are always encouraged to talk to parents/carers but their confidentiality is maintained unless they are deemed to be at risk of abuse.

If the practitioner who is registering the young person is concerned for their health or safety, these concerns will be progressed according to safeguarding policies. These instances are rare but may include a professional involving parents/carers as part of their safeguarding approach.

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

The legal age of consent in the UK is 16 and sexual activity involving a child under 13 is a very serious sexual offence. We know that some teenagers will have sex or be considering sex for the first time before their 16th birthday, typically aged 14 or 15. The Law (Sexual Offences 2003) does not seek to prosecute mutually agreed and consensual sexual activity between teenagers of this age and our priority is to ensure that they are safe and well informed.

The person completing the registration will always discuss the age of consent and encourage young people to delay sex until they are fully confident that they are ready. As long as the young person is deemed Fraser competent (using the framework above), they will get access to a C-Card to help them keep themselves as safe and healthy as possible, and to maintain channels of communication with professionals.

Are you encouraging young people to have sex?

No - national evidence actually suggests the contrary and that the provision of excellent Relationships and Sex Education actually reduces the incidence of unprotected sex and unplanned pregnancy. Today, with the increase in support around sexual health, rates of unplanned teenage pregnancy are at their lowest in over 20 years. The average age of first intercourse for heterosexual teenagers remains 16 years and many wait until some years later.

The C-Card registration conversation enables young people to seek high quality, accurate sexual health information and advice. All practitioners stress that the C-Card does not have an expiry date and that the condoms received are valid for at least the next 3 years and these messages support the delay conversation.

If a young person then does decide 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 delivery in schools (principally to students in Years 10 to 13) complements the Relationships and Sex Education curriculum, where students learn about and discuss topics such as healthy relationships, consent and contraception.

What should I do if I find a C-Card in my home?

You don't need to do anything if you find a C-Card at home. If you both feel comfortable talking openly about sex and relationships, it's great to make sure that your children, or the young people you care for, know that they can speak to you.

Keep your conversation comfortable by not sharing your own personal experiences and if you're ever asked a question you don't know the answer to, look it up together using a reputable website like ours!

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

Some schools will choose to make parents aware if they begin to offer C-Card services, but some won't. Typically C-Card is offered by non-teaching staff and School Nursing teams, and this service is entirely confidential.

