

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONTRACEPTION AND SEXUAL HEALTH: MANCHESTER CASE STUDY

What did Brook do?

Due to lower numbers of young people accessing local sexual health services since the COVID pandemic, the Brook Manchester team explored young peoples' current attitudes towards contraception.

Why did Brook do this?

Broader research suggests that factors such as social media are influencing young peoples' lower uptake of contraception, and specifically hormonal contraception.

A recent study carried out in Scotland with 16-24 year olds, discovered that young people felt they were not having clear information from school, or health practitioners about the potential side effects of hormonal contraception, and therefore look to friends and social media to learn from each other's experiences.

How did Brook do this?

We used mixed methods to better understand young peoples' attitudes and experiences towards contraception including two in-person interactive focus groups, to help to generate discussion, and an online survey.

The survey was promoted via a QR code in posters in colleges and via Brook clinics, some young people were sent a SMS message following their visit and invited to complete the survey. Therefore, many survey respondents are familiar with Brook. The survey ran for approximately 2 months during September 2022-October 2022, and was completed by 215 young people in Manchester aged 16-19 years. And the focus groups were attended by 13 young people in Manchester aged 15-18 years old.

"Picked social media because you don't get judged."

(Young person in a focus group)

What did Brook Learn?

- Half of survey respondents gathered their information about contraception from reading online/on social media about peoples' experiences of contraception, this was the most popular option.
- The most popular choice of contraception methods were condoms, with 62% of those voting for condoms at their top choice of contraception method.
- Just under 8% voted for the contraceptive implant as the most likely method they would choose.
- Many survey respondents spoke about preferring options like condoms, opting not to have a method that contained hormones due to worrying about the side effects of these methods.
- Some young people also expressed concern about painful procedures associated with some contraceptive methods.
- Other themes that emerged from the qualitative data was young people not knowing about the broad spectrum of contraceptive choices.
- Young people see cost as a barrier towards accessing contraception.

What will Brook do next?

- We would like to further explore attitudes towards hormonal contraception and condoms across the country to strengthen our approach to engaging young people in conversations about contraception and choices.
- We will utilise Brook's social media platforms to raise awareness about contraceptive choices, including highlighting that contraception is free.
- The findings will be used to update Brook's education sessions, to consider how we can counter some of the negative stories about contraception being portrayed across social media, and provide a space for young people to understand the pros and cons of different contraceptive choices.
- Brook will launch a new digital contraceptive tool, soon to be released.

"Brook made my experience very good and comfortable, they were very understanding and sweet people." (Survey respondent)

We'd like to thank all of the young people who took part in the survey and focus groups, and all of the Brook staff in Manchester who made it happen.

If you would like further information about this consultation please contact:
participation@brook.org.uk

If you would like more information about contraception please visit the Brook website: brook.org.uk/topics/contraception/

