

NATIONAL PARTICIPATION CONSULTATION

Summary 2021/22



What did Brook do?

Brook wanted to understand the experiences of boys and young men (BYM) when accessing online sexual health and wellbeing services. Brook wanted to learn more about the choices, options and access available to BYM.

Brook ran a national consultation to hear from boys and young men, and wanted to answer this question:

'What role do online services have to play in improving access to sexual health services for boys/young men (BYM)?

Why did Brook do it?

Brook conducted this research because:

- It's important for Brook to give young people the opportunity to shape and co-produce its services. It's one of Brook's strategic objectives to invest in young people's skills and knowledge.
- Brook wanted to know if there are any barriers to accessing digital sexual health services, especially for boys and young men.
- Brook wants every young person to feel able to access its services. However, boys and young men access Brook's services in lower numbers (they've made up 15% of our service users since 2017/18). Since Brook launched its online STI home testing services in March 2022, only 23% of those using the service are boys and young men. We wanted to understand why.
- Brook's Participation Team has struggled to hear from boys and young men when developing services. The national consultation was an opportunity to hear from boys and young men and understand how we could improve access to sexual health services and include them in our work.

How did Brook do it?

Brook held 5 focus groups to hear from boys and young men. These were held online and in-person. Brook invited a wide range of boys and young men to attend the focus groups from across the country, 24 young people attended.

The 24 boys and young men were aged between 15-19 and based across England and Wales. The young people had different lived experiences, including young asylum seekers/refugees, young people in supported housing, young people in independent schools, and young people in college, university or employment. Some young people identified themselves as having additional physical or learning difficulties.

What did Brook Learn?

The boys and young men told Brook about different barriers to accessing online sexual services. This included shame and stigma and issues around technology, such as concerns about keeping their data safe, and private.

The groups were asked: what would make them choose an online service over in-person service? They said they might be more convenient and confidential.

Young people told us there were different ways they could be told about these online services. This included:

- Social media platforms (such as Tik Tok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter)
- Shopping websites
- Spotify adverts
- Gaming platforms

They said they wanted information that was funny, accessible, informative, and not scary or intimidating. They would like to see other young people sharing this information, including stories of other young people accessing services.

How can sexual health services be more accessible for boys and young men?

Brook thinks the following could help boys and young men access online sexual health services:

- Normalise the idea that sexual health services are for all genders.
- Make messages about sexual health services more inclusive and accessible to help BYM think about sexual health in a positive light.
- Re-assure BYM that online services are safe and confidential.
- Encourage BYM to access sexual health support in a preventive way. Some of the young people told us they would go to a sexual health service if they had symptoms, but might not otherwise, for example for a routine check-up.

What will Brook do next?

- Brook will use young people's views as it designs and develops its 'Digital Front Door'. This is where young people access sexual health services online from Brook.
- Brook will think about how these findings can impact on sexual health services in Wales.
- Brook will think about how they can use boys and young men's views when speaking with decision-makers and bidding to run services in different parts of the country.
- Brook's Participation team will work with other Brook teams (including education, digital, clinical and communications teams) to think about how young people with English as an additional language (EAL) can access Brook services and resources.

We'd like to say a big thank you to all the young people who took part in the focus groups for sharing their views with Brook.

If you want to get involved or would like further information on the consultation please contact participation@brook.org.uk



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