



North Wales C Card - information for parents and caregivers

What is C Card?

The [North Wales C Card Scheme](#) is a public health programme centering around the distribution of free condoms to young people aged 13 to 25. It is delivered in many areas of the UK.

In North Wales we are part of the [All Wales C Card Scheme](#).

The key aspect of the scheme is the face-to-face contact between a young person seeking free condoms and a C Card trained member of staff providing confidential safer sex education, support, a link to local services and an opportunity for young people to disclose any concerns they may have.

Trained staff can then link them into the right services for further support where needed.

Young people can use their C Card to access free condoms from schools, colleges, sexual health clinics and other outlets. This helps young people to freely access condoms when they need to.

Who can give out the C Card condoms:

Professionals and staff such as nurses, GPs, teachers, youth workers are trained to issue the C Card and condoms to young people. The training covers contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sex and the law (which includes information on consent and safeguarding), inclusive practice, signposting, and using the Public Health Wales administration platform for the scheme.

It is important that young people know where to go to discuss issues and concerns relating to their sexual health when they need to. This has been proven to help keep them safer.

Parents / carers and the staff who work with them can make all the difference in helping a young person have the information and skills to make informed decisions about their own sexual health and well-being, and importantly, help to keep them safe.

Is the C Card Scheme legal?

Yes, it is legal. There is no law prohibiting young people, including under 16's from accessing condoms.

Many young people who use the C Card scheme are not yet sexually active. They are learning about the services that will help them keep healthy and safe when they need them.

Staff can keep the conversations with young people confidential. This is not the same thing as a secret. If a staff member has a worry or concern about the safety of a young person accessing C Card they will inform their safeguarding lead, as per their organisational policy, who may take the concern forward to the appropriate services.

Confidentiality and sexual health for under 16s are legislated for under the [Fraser Guidelines](#). These are a legal judgment linked to sexual health advice and treatment. Although not a legal obligation for C Card, we do use them as part of our best practice.

Why issue condoms to a person under the age of 16?

Although the legal age of consent for sex is 16 in the UK, some young people do have sex below this age. The consequences of an unplanned pregnancy or catching a sexually transmitted infection could seriously affect their life. A key part of signing up to C Card is discussing the legal age of consent. [Fraser Guidelines](#) are applied to check the young person fully understands.

Are you encouraging young people to have sex?

No, giving young people access to free condoms provides key opportunities to share up-to-date accurate information about sex and relationships, consent, STI transmission and unplanned pregnancy. This enables them to make informed choices about whether they are ready to have sex or not.

The C Card Scheme can also link a young person with other support services so they can explore relationships and sex safely.

In summary:

- The C Card Scheme gives out free condoms to young people aged 13 to 25 in North Wales
- C Card is a confidential service which also offers face to face information and advice about relationships and sexual health from a trained member of staff
- Condoms help prevent unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

Signing up to C Card

A young person may have already had the conversation with a parent / carer about wanting to sign up to the C Card Scheme. However, some young people may choose to discuss with friends, and some may choose to keep things to themselves.

As we know, young people are often curious, so they may not be sexually active but want to familiarise themselves with the process of signing up to C Card. Whatever stage they are at, should they choose to sign up to C Card they will receive all the support, advice and safer sex education needed to protect themselves from unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection transmission, whether now or in the future.

The sign-up process takes approximately 20 minutes; a trained member of staff, who may already be working with the young person in another capacity, asks the young person a series of questions to determine whether they have a sound understanding of sex and how to keep themselves safe ([Fraser Guidelines](#)).

Practitioners consider any safeguarding concerns. For example:

- if a child under 13 years of age is sexually active a Safeguarding referral would automatically be submitted.
- if a young person presents on more than one occasion about STIs or termination of pregnancy then child sexual exploitation will be highlighted as a possible factor.

After a set number of visits, a review is scheduled with the young person. This provides an opportunity for a check-in and further education. It is also a chance for the young person to ask any questions or talk through any concerns they may have relating to relationships or sexual health in general. Staff can set frequent review dates where it may be beneficial to the young person.

The RSE curriculum provides opportunities for young people to access relationships and sex education, including safer sex. So, the majority of young people are likely to be aware condoms are the best barrier to protect themselves and partners in a sexual relationship from STIs, as well as unplanned pregnancy.

Being empowered to make informed healthy choices about their sexual health becomes an important part of a young person's well-being, for their present and their future, as does knowing where to access support from an approachable trained professional within their provision or elsewhere.

Accessing the C Card scheme is a personal decision and may be something a young person may consider in the future, or not at all. However, if and when they are ready, it is one less barrier if they know where to go and how it works.

Please see below for further links:

- BCUHB website page for sexual health - <https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/services/hospital-services/sexual-health/services/young-people-and-c-card-scheme/>
- C Card Centre finder - <http://cccymru.co.uk/outlets/find/>
- Condoms, contraception and sexually transmitted infections - [Sexual Health Wales](#) - this website offers useful information on all things sexual health and (if you are over 16) you can order Test and Post STI screening kits and postal condoms. <https://www.shwales.online/>
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre – <https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/health-advice/sexual-health-advice/amethyst-sexual-assault-referral-centre/>