

**SEXUAL HEALTH AND  
SEXUAL SAFETY  
DURING YOUR STAY AT  
CITY & HACKNEY  
CENTRE FOR MENTAL  
HEALTH**

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# Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is aimed at everyone that is admitted to City and Hackney Centre for Mental Health.

It focuses on a specific area: **sexual health and wellbeing**

This is because we recognise that this very important aspect of physical health and mental well being can be very difficult to talk about.

But together we can create an environment where you can talk freely if you wish to.

This will mean different things for different people. It could mean that you feel able to answer questions about your sexual orientation, express your gender identity or ask questions about sexual side effects of medication. It may mean you feel able to discuss sexual health, sexual expression, or relationships and intimacy as part of your recovery goals.

It could mean that you feel supported to disclose an incident of sexual harm or able to identify someone that you would be comfortable to talk to.

In return we will respect your choices and work with you to look at ways in which we can best support you.




Everyone admitted to the ward is asked questions and offered assessments in areas such as smoking, lifestyle and life skills. We want sexual health to be part of every day health so will also offer sexual health screening along with these baseline checks, on admission or during your time as an inpatient.

This leaflet will show you how to collect a sample that will screen for sexually transmitted infections.

We also want everyone to know what a sexual safety incident is, and feel able to report it if they think that they may have experienced or witnessed one. We will believe you and have a duty to keep you and others safe from further harm.

This leaflet is designed to be informative, but also to support you to raise subjects that you might find difficult.

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The sensitive nature of this subject can cause distress. The pages identified with red shading and a traffic light are those that may arouse particularly difficult memories associated with a traumatic event or experiences and may be best avoided or looked at with support

# What is gender health?

Gender health is defined as a person's opportunity to live in the gender that feels most real or comfortable to that individual and to express that gender with freedom .

The difference between sex and gender is that sex is a biological concept based on biological characteristics such as the difference in genitalia in male and female. Gender on the other hand deals with personal, societal and cultural perceptions of sexuality.

Many people do not firmly fit within one gender, and instead embrace the concept of gender fluidity. Gender fluid people do not identify themselves as having a fixed gender.

- **Cisgender** denotes or relates to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.
- **Transgender** relates to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.
- **Transsexualism** – is the desire to live and be accepted as a member of the opposite sex, usually accompanied by the wish to have treatment to make physical appearance more consistent with a person's gender identity
- **Transvestism** – where a person occasionally wears clothes typically associated with the opposite gender (cross-dressing)

All gender identities are valid and should be supported equally. If someone's gender is outside of the gender binary or they don't have a gender identity at all, it simply reflects the diversity of their identities.

Staff should refer to you by the pronouns that you prefer, he/she him/her, or gender-neutral pronouns such as they/their.

# What is sexual orientation?

Sexuality is an important part of how we view ourselves and is fundamental to health, quality of life, and general well-being.

Sexual orientation is a person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual.

People who are attracted to a different gender (for example, women who are attracted to men or men who are attracted to women) often call themselves straight or heterosexual.

People who are attracted to people of the same gender often call themselves **gay**. Gay women may prefer the term **lesbian**.

People who are attracted to both men and women often call themselves **bisexual**.

People whose attractions span across many different gender identities (male, female, transgender, genderqueer, intersex, etc) may call themselves **pansexual**.

People who are unsure about their sexual orientation may call themselves **questioning** or **curious**.

People who don't experience any sexual attraction for anyone often call themselves **asexual**.

Some people don't think any of these labels describe them accurately.

Some people don't like the idea of labels at all.

Others feel comfortable with certain labels and not others.

As part of NHS monitoring you will be asked about your sexual orientation. It's up to you to decide how you want to label yourself, if at all.

# What is sexual health?

Sexual health is an important part of physical and mental health and wellbeing. It means different things to different people. For some it is about having a positive attitude about sex and feeling comfortable with one's sexual identity.

It can involve understanding and respecting the importance of safe sex, both for the individual and their partners, and a relationship based on love, intimacy and care for another person, or a casual counter based on mutual attraction.

It can be about feeling able to set boundaries, and have pleasurable and safe experiences or being able to discuss sexual history, sexual dysfunction or ask for emotional and psychological support if you have negative past experiences.

Sexual health is also about accepting that others' sexual practices may be different to our own, but as long as the participants consent, and feel safe we will not judge them.

Consent means permission to engage in any intimate activity or sex. It is important to know that sexual contact without consent is illegal regardless of the age of the people involved. In the UK, the age of consent for sexual activity is 16.

Most commonly sexual health is thought of in terms of knowledge and practices around sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy. Sexually transmitted infections can be transmitted through unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex, by genital contact and through sharing sex toys. These matter because they can cause long term fertility and health issues if left untreated.

If a person is able to access barrier protection; condoms/ dental dams, information and services if they think they may be at risk of or have symptoms of an STI they are generally thought to have sexual health.

# How we can support you to screen for sexually transmitted infections (STI's)

The majority of sexually transmitted infections have no symptoms or only mild symptoms that may not be recognized as a STI. It can be time consuming to go to a sexual health centre or you may find it embarrassing (although there is no need to be).

However, for this reason, on admission we will offer you screening for Chlamydia trachomatis (CT), Neisseria gonorrhoeae (GC) and Trichomonas vaginalis (TV). We will also discuss whether you would like to be tested for blood borne viruses when you have your admission bloods taken.

If you would like to take the opportunity to have a sexual health screening, staff can give you a registration form and the kit that you need to collect the sample.

You must fill out ALL parts of the registration form.

**HSHS**  
Homerton Sexual Health Services

**NHS**  
Homerton University Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Ward Registration Form**

First Name.....  
Surname.....  
Date of birth..... Age.....  
Gender: Female:  Male:  Other: .....

I have sex with  
Women:   
Men:   
Both:

Ethnicity.....  
Address.....  
Postcode.....  
Mobile.....  
Can we call, text and leave a voice mail with your results using this mobile number?  
Yes  No

Disclaimer:  
HSHS need your details in order to register you on our confidential system.  
We will only ever use your mobile number to contact you unless we contact you and you have not consented for same.  
We will not share your information with anyone unless we have concerns about you.

**Signature**.....  
**Date**.....

Disclaimer:  
I am happy for HSHS to contact the ward doctors and nurses to let them know my results.

**Signature**.....  
**Date**.....

Homerton Sexual Health Service will NEVER give staff your results without your knowledge and permission. This is a confidential service. However if you do give permission, we can support you to start treatment straight away.

# What does screening involve?

Whether you provide a urine sample or a vaginal swab and/ or anal swab will depend on your genitalia.

For most people who have sex using their penis this can be the same sample that is used for a urinary drug screen or a urinalysis.



For someone who has sex using their vagina, the vaginal swab is usually the preferred and most accurate method for testing. The instructions for taking your own specimen are below:

Remove your lower garments.  
Stand up, you can raise one leg up on a chair.

Take swab from purple packet.  
Hold it in the middle.  
Do not put it down on any surface.



Gently insert swab into the vaginal opening.  
Rotate swab between your finger and thumb while you count to 10.  
Put swab back into purple packet.



# How to take anal swabs

**Step 1** - Remove your lower garments. Squat down or lie down on your side.

**Step 2** – Take swab from purple packet.

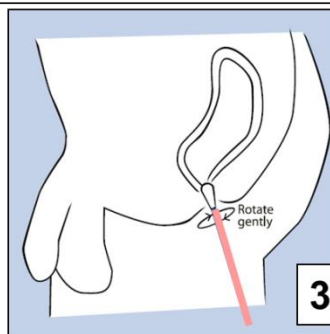
Hold it just above the middle.

Do not put it down on any surface.



**Step 3** – Gently insert swab into your anus and slide it in a few cm until your fingers are near your anus.

Rotate swab between your finger and thumb several times.



**Step 4** – Carefully remove the swab.

Put swab back into purple packet.

# How to take throat swabs

**Step 1** - Look in the mirror.

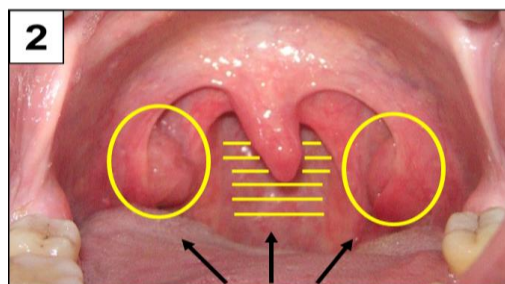
Take swab from purple packet.

Do not put it down on any surface.



**Step 2** - Open your mouth as wide as possible and say "Ahh".

Wipe cotton tip of swab around the throat: over the tonsils on both sides and on the very back part of the throat. Try not to touch the teeth, cheeks or tongue with the swab.



**Step 3** - Remove the swab from your mouth.

Put swab back in the purple packet.

After collecting your specimen please pass the packet to the staff member who is supporting you

You will always be asked to take your own swab and should do this in a private area where no one can see or interrupt.

You will receive your results in 7-14 days by text or phone call.

*If you do not feel ready to have an STI screening on admission, you can approach staff at any time and we will be happy to facilitate this for you*

If you do not want to have sexual health screening undertaken whilst you are on the ward or in hospital you can also book an appointment at The Clifden Centre



The Clifden Centre is part of Homerton Hospital. Their website allows you to order a postal test or book appointments online <https://sexualhealthbookings.homerton.nhs.uk/index.php>



You can also get free and discreet STI testing delivered to your door if you live in most London boroughs. You can access this by visiting <https://www.shl.uk/about-shl>

# The Free Condom Project

Condoms are the only type of contraception that can both prevent pregnancy and protect against sexually transmitted infections. There are two types of condoms: male condoms, worn on the penis; and female condoms, worn inside the vagina.

When used correctly every time you have sex, male condoms are **98% effective**. This means 2 out of 100 women will become pregnant in one year when male condoms are used as contraception.

Staff can sign you up for The Free Condom Project regardless of your age or Come Correct if you are under the age of 25.

- This will allow you free access to condoms at a number of pharmacies in the community by simply showing your registration card.
- It is available to anyone; whether you identify as male, female or are non binary.
- Your information will be stored on a secure database.
- We will ensure that you receive your card prior to discharge.



# Sexual dysfunction

Sexual dysfunction generally is classified into four categories:

- Desire disorders: The lack of sexual desire or interest in sex
- Arousal disorders: The inability to become physically aroused during sexual activity, including problems achieving and maintaining an erection (erectile dysfunction)
- Orgasm disorders: The delay or absence of orgasm (climax)
- Pain disorders: Pain during intercourse (this mostly affects women.)



# What can cause sexual side effects of medication?

A large range of different types of medications can cause sexual side effects in some people. These include:

- Non-prescription medicines
- Antidepressants
- Antipsychotic medications
- Anti-hypertensive medications (used to treat high blood pressure)
- Diuretics
- Centrally acting agents
- $\alpha$ -Adrenergic blockers
- $\beta$ -adrenergic (beta) blockers
- Illicit substances such as marijuana and cocaine

However, the symptoms of different mental health conditions can also be linked to problems with arousal, orgasm, pain or desire and can be mistaken for sexual side effects.

*Just as we would encourage you to report any side effects we would encourage you to discuss with the medical or nursing team any concerns that you may have before starting on a medication or since commencing on a medication as there will be options available to you.*

*This applies both whilst you are an inpatient and when in the community.*

# What is sexual safety?

Sexual safety can mean different things to different people and can take many forms. This is not an exhaustive list, so it does not mean that an incident has to be on this list to count.

However in general it means that everyone has a right to feel safe and free from:

- Inappropriate sexual comments or questions.
- Being asked for sex or sexual favours
- Unnecessary exposure of a person's body parts
- Any sexual act without consent
- Inappropriate touching
- The exchange of drugs or other goods or services for a sexual act
- Harm caused by another person's sexually disinhibited behaviours
- Being pressured into sending/ receiving naked pictures
- Being made to feel scared, anxious, or controlled
- Online harassment such as: inappropriate sexual comments on social media, sharing explicit images & videos with someone who doesn't want to see them or hasn't given permission for them to be shared

**Sexual safety incidents are rare, however they do occur and can involve another patient, a visitor or a staff member.**

**All sexual safety incidents are serious, none of it is okay and some actions are illegal.**

# Why does sexual safety matter?

Sexual safety matters because a sexual safety incident such as those described:

- Can cause significant distress and harm
- Damages a person's self-esteem
- Affects other relationships
- Can potentially result in sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- Can never be justified or excused.
- Can leave a person feeling that they were to blame – this is a normal response, but it is important to know that it was never the victims fault.

*Rape or sexual violence can happen to anyone regardless of age or gender, race, social status or religion. These are criminal offences and can be reported to the police in the same way as any other crime.*

# How staff should support you with your sexual safety

Staff should do their best to create an environment where you will:

- Feel safe from sexual harm
- Be heard and listened to if you experience harassment or sexual assault whether this is something that occurred during your past or since your admission to hospital.
- Feel able to make requests and have care that takes into account your individual needs and any past experiences of trauma; this is called trauma informed care.
- Receive adequate care planning if sexual disinhibition is a symptom of your mental state to reduce the distress or harm that you may cause others by your behaviours.



# How staff should respond to a sexual safety incident

- You will be treated with compassion and understanding when disclosing an incident
- You will be informed of your options
- You will be protected from further contact with the person alleged to have caused you harm regardless of whether this is another patient, a family member or friend, a staff member or a visitor
- You will be supported to receive emergency contraception, get tested for STIs and be considered for Hepatitis B vaccination and PEP as post exposure prevention if needed.
- You will be escorted to a sexual assault referral centre (SARC), these can provide medical care and forensic examination.
- You will be supported to make a report to the police and have the incident fully investigated.
- You will receive appropriate support and after care.

*If you do not feel able to tell staff, or do not think that a response was adequate we would encourage you to contact the free and confidential Patient Advice and Liaison Service service on 08007834839. The CQC on 0300 061 6161. Or the police on 101 or 999*

It can be difficult to 'talk about sex' and, sometimes it is easier to put words onto paper.

The following pages can make those conversations easier to start.

You can fill the pages in that apply alone or with support from a staff member or an interpreter or a friend and share these with those you feel comfortable to do so

## **I would like to talk about my gender identity**

The name that I wish to be referred to is

---

The gender identity I identify as is

---

I would like to be referred to with the following pronouns

---

# I would like to talk about my sexual orientation

The orientation that I identify best with is:

CODE	ORIENTATION	(Tick which applies)
1	Heterosexual (straight)	
2	Gay or lesbian	
3	Bisexual	
4	Other	
U	I do not know	
Z	I do not want to say	

## I would like to talk about my sexual health

I would like to have the following screens (the preferred method for males that have sex with females is urine. For males who have sex with other males it is urine, throat and anal. For females it is vagina. Some females will also wish to have throat and anal swabs)

Type	Tick
Urine	
Vagina	
Throat	
Anal	

I would like to be signed up to The Free Condom Project

Yes	No

I would like to discuss contraception/ symptoms with a sexual health nurse

Yes	No

## I would like to talk about sexual symptoms

Type	Tick / cross
Desire	
Orgasm	
Arousal	
Pain	
Other	

## I would like to talk about sexual side effects of medication

Type	Tick / cross
Desire	
Orgasm	
Arousal	
Pain	
Other	

## I would like to talk about sexual safety

I prefer staff that are:

<b>Male</b>	
<b>Female</b>	
<b>Don't mind</b>	

If I have to be restrained for my or others safety as a last resort I want you to do your best to support it to be

Type of restraint	Tick/ cross
Seated	
Standing	
Prone	
Supine	

I would like to disclose an incident

<b>Yes</b>	
<b>No</b>	

The staff member I feel able to discuss this with is:

---

If they are not available I would like to talk to:

---

# Other sources of information

- **Brook:** Locate local services for contraception, chemsex support, terminating pregnancy. They offer information on topics that include sexuality, sex and consent, health and well being.  
<https://www.brook.org.uk>
- **The NHS website** lists both local and national sexual health screening providers with the services offered and opening hours.  
<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/sexual-health-information-and-support/locationsearch/734>
- **Broken Rainbow** is the national Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) domestic violence charity  
<https://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk>
- **ManKind** support male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence across the UK who are in opposite and same sex relationships. <https://www.mankind.org.uk/>
- **Women's Aid** – is a national charity supporting women and children victims of domestic violence.  
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>
- The Survivors Trust: support victims of rape, sexual violence, childhood sexual abuse: <https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/>
- **Positive East** provides HIV testing and prevention, medical counselling, campaigning, and emotional support services  
<https://www.positiveeast.org.uk>
- **Disrespect Nobody** is an education tool for learning about relationships and what is and isn't ok  
<https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/>
- **The NHS website** offers support those who identify as both male and female who experience sexual side effects  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/male-sexual-problems/>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/female-sexual-problems>

Sexual assault and rape are  
**NEVER** a victims fault

We understand that some of the content in this leaflet is sensitive, it may have triggered a difficult memory and it may have caused distress.

Please speak to a member of the team who can support you.

You can also call:

Survivors Trust [08088 010818](tel:08088010818)

Mon, Tues & Wed 10am-7:30pm

Thur 10am-6pm

Fri 10am-2pm

*This leaflet is co-produced by Rachel and Lenna, with support from Nicola at Homerton Sexual Health Service  
It is not necessarily representative of the views of East London NHS Foundation Trust*

