

# Talking to our Young People About Their Sexual Health

Thu 9th May. 2019 | 19:30 to 21:00

Fleetville Infants and Nursery School, Woodstock Rd South Entrance, AL1 4QJ

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Adolescence is a time of rapid sexual development, both physically as the body goes through puberty and psychologically, as sexual and gender identities are developed. Young people in the UK are reported to have the poorest levels of sexual health and well-being compared with other industrialised nations. Second only to the US, the UK has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy within the developed world and the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections occur in 15-24 year olds.

We know too that of the 36% of 15 year olds in the UK that report having had sex, a good percentage of them regret that decision. Additionally, we know that adolescents are the most likely age group to be affected by sexual assault, the most common age being 16 years. These are only some of the reasons why it is imperative that young people are given ample opportunity to talk about their sexual health and are empowered with the knowledge necessary to maintain good sexual health.

This workshop will discuss some of the changes we might expect as our children develop sexually and how we can best support them through this process and promote good sexual health. It will also touch upon how best to raise this sensitive topic with our children in a non-judgemental and respectful way, but also where we can signpost them if we don't feel best-placed to do that

## Who is this talk for?

This talk will be aimed at parents, grandparents and carers of children 8-18 years old.

## What will parents gain from this talk?

An understanding of what to expect as children develop sexually, both in terms of physical changes as well as cognitive changes and their impact on sexual behaviour. The importance of an open and non-judgemental communication style to empower their children in achieving good sexual health. The information required to maintain good sexual health including appropriate signposting to services within Hertfordshire. An understanding of confidentiality and consent issues relating to the treatment of young people.

## About the Speaker

**Dr Alison Cowan** is a GP working across a few practices in Hertfordshire. In addition to this, she delivers a weekly family planning clinic for Sexual Health Hertfordshire. She has a specialist interest in adolescent health where she has completed a significant amount of training. She is currently developing a health service embedded in primary care specifically targeted to young people and is working closely with local schools and healthcare providers to achieve that. Her dream is to improve universal health services for young people.

Mum to 3 teenage girls, Alison has also taken time out with her family to volunteer in Uganda through Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). Her role there as GP Clinic Educator was to implement a training programme for clinic staff scattered across Uganda, including biannual workshops for all the doctors and the development of a training team. She also developed a comprehensive sexually transmitted infection (STI) programme for the local community which included commercial sex workers. She was able to obtain funding and ran an STI risk score research study in collaboration with Oxford University. She achieved first prize in the annual hospital scientific day in Kampala for her sexual health project.