Investigating the use and opinions of contraceptive services in socially disadvantaged young adults: a questionnaire survey of 120 FE College students

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Background
In March 2014, NICE published guidelines to improve access to high quality contraceptive services in under 25s. However, it also highlighted a lack of evidence in the effectiveness of current service models. The UK continues to have one of the highest teenage conception rates in Western Europe, with increased rates in areas of higher deprivation. We investigated inner city students’ use and opinions of contraceptive services.

Method
A confidential questionnaire survey was conducted amongst students age <25 at Lambeth College in June 2015. Data were entered and analysed using SPSS 21.

Results
The response rate was 78% (120/154). Mean age of responders was 18 years (range 16-24) and 23% were male. They (n=119) defined their ethnicity as black (61%), white (16%) or other (13%). Of 119 responders 71% were single and 23% smoked.

Almost half of students (45%, 51/113) believed sexual health services need improving, with 50% (40/80) requesting more clinics on campus. Of 120 respondents, 15% (18/120) said they had difficulty accessing contraception and 9% (11/118, 5 male, 6 female) reported an unplanned pregnancy. Only 28% (33/118) were currently using contraception of whom 60% (20/33) used condoms and just 6% (2/33) relied on more than one method. Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives were used by 30% (6/20) of women using contraception. Men tended to obtain contraception from their college (47%, 8/17) and women from a sexual health clinic (27%, 12/45). Less than 20% (11/62) obtained contraception from their GP.

Discussion
Many students required clarification of the term ‘contraception’, with half of students requesting more sexual health education (50%, 42/84) and more information on contraceptive methods (48%, 38/80). The most requested service improvement was additional walk-in clinics (51%, 41/80), suggesting that close location and impromptu access – including availability throughout weekends (41%, 33/80) – are priorities for disadvantaged youth.

**References**

