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Chlamydia Screening & Treatment service specification published

PSNC and the Department of Health have today published a template Enhanced service specification for chlamydia screening and treatment services.

Chlamydia infection is the sexually transmitted infection most frequently diagnosed in genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics in England. Prevalence of infection is highest in sexually active young men and women, especially those aged less than 25 years. Since many infections are asymptomatic, a large proportion of cases remain undiagnosed, although infection can be diagnosed easily and effectively treated.

Chlamydia screening is currently carried out across England as part of the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP) which is managed nationally by the Health Protection Agency (HPA); PCTs manage the local delivery of the programme through Chlamydia Screening Offices.

There is a Vital Signs Indicator for 2008/9 which includes a target of achieving 17 per cent for chlamydia screening and testing in young people between 15 and 24 years of age. The HPA's emphasis this year continues to be on promoting and establishing a substantial increase in screening by the NCSP.

Commenting on the publication of the template service specification, Alastair Buxton, Head of NHS Services, PSNC said:

"This template service specification should help commissioners and pharmacists to develop more chlamydia screening and treatment services across England. Evidence of the role that community pharmacy can play in the NCSP has already been provided by a number of early adopter sites across the country.

"It is important that the HPA's ambition to significantly increase screening rates is achieved; community pharmacy can play a key role in making this happen using the widespread access that the pharmacy network provides."

Dr Keith Ridge, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health, said:

"As this month's Health Protection Agency report makes clear, young people between the ages of 16-24 years are most at risk of being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection – especially genital chlamydia. Undetected and untreated, this can have profound long-term consequences such as infertility or pelvic inflammatory disease.

"Pharmacies are easily accessible and have been successfully providing sexual health

*For further information please contact the PSNC press office
on 0207 618 9187 or at psnc@luther.co.uk.*

services, often on a drop in basis, for many years. Young people need that choice of where to go, especially where their sexual health is concerned. This national template means they can be confident of a consistent high quality level of service.”

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For more information, please contact the PSNC press office on 0207 618 9187.

Notes to Editors

1. PSNC (The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee) is the body that represents community pharmacies in England and Wales on NHS matters.
2. The service specification will be published on www.psn.org.uk and www.pcc.nhs.uk.

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