

Contraception & Sexual Health FAQS

**Brandon
Centre**
Here for Young People

I am over 25 years old...

Q: I am 25 (or older), can I use your service?

Our services are only available for young people under 25 years old. Adult services available include Archway Sexual Health Clinic (Archway) and Mortimer Market Centre (Warren Street), which are also free services.

You can also have an STI testing kit sent to you via SHL.uk for free, if you do not have any symptoms.

I'm a young person under 25...

Visiting Brandon Centre/sexual health clinic

Q: Do I need to book an appointment or can I just drop by?

We have both appointment slots and a drop-in service. It is recommended you call us so we can let you know which service is best for you.

Usually you will be given an appointment to see a doctor or nurse if you need contraception prescribed or you have symptoms of a sexually transmitted infection (e.g. lumps or bumps, unusual discharge etc.).

If you do not have symptoms or need contraception, you will see our sexual health support workers via the drop-in service. Through the drop-in service you can access the C-Card free condom service, STI testing, pregnancy tests and termination of pregnancy referrals, and general sexual health advice.

To book an appointment and confirm drop-in hours, please call **020 7267 4792**.

Q: What will happen at my first visit?

When you arrive at the centre for your first appointment, the receptionist will give you a triage form and a new patient registration to complete. This form will ask you for some basic details such as your full name, date of birth, mobile number and the reason for your appointment.

Your details will remain **confidential** and are kept at the centre on our secure electronic system.

There is no need to bring anything with you such as ID, but we do ask that you arrive five minutes before your appointment time in order to complete the forms.

Q: Will you tell my parents, school or GP that I've been to the Brandon Centre?

No, your visit to the Brandon Centre is confidential ([link to full confidentiality statement](#)). This means we will not tell anyone about your visit, even if you're under 16. But you will be encouraged to talk to a parent, carer or trusted adult about your visit if you can.

However, if we think that you or another young person is at serious risk of immediate harm, we would try to put you in touch with services that can help. We will do our best to speak to you about this first.

In the most exceptional circumstances we may need to make a decision to breach confidentiality, in order to protect you or another young person.

We will not share any information about you with your GP without your consent (agreement).

Q: Can I bring a friend or family member with me?

Yes of course, however, we have limited space in our waiting room so please do not bring more than one friend.

Q: Can my friend/family member come into my consultation with me?

We will always ask to speak to you on your own first so that we can explain our confidentiality policy and ask a few questions privately.

You then may be able to invite your friend or family member into a consultation, if you would like them to be present. However, please note that this is at the discretion of the clinician.

Q: I'm under 18, do I have to attend my appointment with an adult?

No, if you are between the ages of 12-24 you can attend your appointment without a parent, carer or guardian.

You also do not need parental or adult permission to come to the Brandon Centre or access any of our services. If you are under 16 or have a learning difficulty, then staff will use the Fraser Guidelines to make sure you understand the services offered.

Q: Will I have to wait to be seen?

For young people with an appointment, we will do our very best to see you on time. However, there can sometimes be unavoidable delays in the clinic.

If you have come for the drop-in service, a staff member will keep you updated on when you will be seen.

Q: Do I have to pay?

No, all our services are funded by Public Health England and are free for young people **under the age of 25**.

Q: I have never had sex before, can I still come for a consultation?

Absolutely! If you are thinking of having sex and/or have questions about relationships and sex, please give our sexual health support workers a call on **020 7267 4792**.

Alternatively, drop in during our drop-in hours for a consultation.

Q: What happens when I turn 25?

Our services are only available for young people under 25 years old. Adult services available include Archway Sexual Health Clinic (Archway) and Mortimer Market Centre (Warren Street), which are also free services.

You can also have an STI testing kit sent to you via SHL.uk for free, if you do not have any symptoms.

Contraception

Q: What methods of contraception can I get?

There are many methods available. But different methods suit different people. You can discuss the different methods available with our clinicians to check they are right for you.

The methods we can provide at Brandon Centre are:

- Combined pill
- Progestogen-only pill
- Depo injection
- Contraceptive patch
- Implant

You can also speak to our sexual health support workers for general information about all methods of contraception. We do not fit intrauterine device (IUD or copper coil) or intrauterine system (IUS) at the Brandon Centre.

Q: Are there any side effects?

Contraception can affect people differently. Side effects can include headaches, mood changes and differences to periods and bleeding, often with periods being lighter or less painful. But with many methods to choose from, we can help you find one that suits you.

These possible side effects will be discussed in your appointment with a doctor or nurse.

If you have any concerns or notice changes, please call us on **0207 267 4792**.

Q: I forgot to take my pill/change my patch/get my repeat injection – what should I do?

If you have forgotten to take or change your contraception, do not panic. Please give us a call on **020 7267 4792** and our clinicians can advise you.

You could now be at risk of getting pregnant, so may need to use an additional barrier method (external or internal condoms) for the next 7 days. If you have been sexually active, you may need emergency contraception.

Q: Can I get free condoms?

Yes. We have a wide range of external (male) condoms including a selection of sizes, textured, ribbed and dotted, flavoured and latex-free condoms. We also have internal condoms (often called femidoms) available too.

You can sign up to the C-Card scheme if you are between 13-24 years old. You can get free condoms and lubricant, a maximum of once a week, from sites all over London, including youth groups and pharmacies. Check out the full list at www.comecorrect.org.uk or on the C-Card app.

You can register for a C-Card or pick up condoms for free at the Brandon Centre during our drop-in hours.

Q: I just want condoms; do I need an appointment?

If you don't need anything else, you do not need an appointment. You can register for a C-Card or pick up condoms for free at Brandon Centre during our drop-in clinic. Call us on **020 7267 4792** to check our drop-in times.

Q: I need a repeat prescription of pill/patch, can I do so without seeing the nurse?

It is important that the clinician runs through a few health checks with you to ensure that everything is working well before your pill is re-despatched. Unfortunately, this service is not available as part of the walk in and will need to be booked as an appointment.

Q: If I am using hormonal contraception, do I still need to use condoms?

Yes, we would recommend using barrier methods of contraception (e.g. internal and external condoms) even if you are using a hormonal method. Hormonal contraception prevents pregnancy but **cannot** prevent STIs.

STIs can be passed on through unprotected sexual contact, including oral, vaginal and anal sex, genital to genital contact, and sharing sex toys. See below for more information on STIs.

Q: What is LARC?

LARC stands for long-acting reversible contraception. These methods prevent pregnancy for several months or years after one procedure. This means you do not need to remember to take or change your contraception every day or week. Once this period is over or the method is removed, fertility (ability to get pregnant) can return immediately.

Methods include:

- Injection (up to 3 months)
- Implant (up to 3 years)
- intrauterine device (IUD) (between 5-10 years, depending on type)
- intrauterine system (IUS) (between 3-5 years, depending on type)

At Brandon Centre, we can offer the injection and implant. Unfortunately, we do not fit IUDs or IUS at Brandon Centre. However, you can have this fitted once you have an appointment at Brook or Pulse, other clinics in the Camish Network.

To book an appointment, please call:

Brook - 020 7387 8700

Pulse - 020 7527 1300

Emergency Contraception

Q: What do I do if I have had unprotected sex or my contraception has failed?

If you've had unprotected sex, forgotten your contraception or a condom splits or slips off, don't panic. Emergency hormonal contraception (often called the 'morning-after pill' or 'Plan-B') can help to prevent pregnancy by delaying or preventing ovulation. You have up to 5 days to take this tablet. **But the sooner you take it after unprotected sex, the better it works.**

You can get emergency hormonal contraception for free from the Brandon Centre.

In order to access this, you will need an appointment with a doctor or nurse. To book your appointment, please call **020 7267 4792**.

Emergency hormonal contraception is also free for under-25s at the following **pharmacies (link to list/EHC map)** in Camden and Islington.

You may also need to do an STI test in two weeks. We recommend coming in to do a pregnancy test in 3 weeks to confirm the emergency contraception has worked.

Q: What is emergency contraception ('the morning-after pill' or 'Plan-B')?

Emergency hormonal contraception (often called the 'morning-after pill' or 'Plan-B') can help to prevent pregnancy by delaying or preventing ovulation.

There are two types of emergency contraception, The emergency contraceptive pill and the IUD (Copper coil).

There are two types of emergency hormonal contraceptive pill.

Levonorgestrel (LNG) which can be taken **up to 72 hours (three days)** after unprotected sex, and Ulipristal Acetate (UPA) which can be taken **up to 120 hours (five days)** after unprotected sex. But the sooner, the better.

The IUD can be fitted as emergency contraception **within 120 hours (five days)** of unprotected sex, or five days after the earliest time you could have ovulated. If you are unsure of when you could have last ovulated, then don't worry as a clinician can work this out with you.

Unfortunately, we do not fit IUDs at The Brandon Centre, however, you can have this fitted once you have an appointment at Brook or Pulse.

To book an appointment, please call:

Brook - 020 7387 8700

Pulse - 020 7527 1300

Q: Does the emergency hormonal contraceptive pill always work?

Emergency hormonal contraception is very effective and it is **more effective the sooner you take it** after unprotected sex. Some things which can make the emergency contraception pill less effective are:

- If you delay taking emergency contraception, for example, the pill Levonorgestrel (LNG) is most effective when taken within the first 24 hours
- If you vomit within two hours of taking LNG, or within three hours of taking ellaOne
- If you have had unprotected sex at another time, either since your last period or since taking the emergency contraception

If any of these things have happened, give us a ring on **0207 267 4792** and we can advise you what to do next.

Q: Is there a limit to how many times I can have emergency contraception? Is it safe to use?

There is no limit on accessing emergency contraception if you need to take it. It is a safe medication to use and does not affect your future fertility (ability to get pregnant).

It may be useful to have a conversation with our clinicians about a regular method of contraception if you need to use emergency contraception often.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Q: What is an STI?

A sexually transmitted infection is an infection passed on through unprotected sexual contact. They can be transmitted through bodily fluids, such as semen, vaginal fluid and anal mucus, or through skin-to-skin contact.

STIs can be passed on through:

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex
- Genital-to-genital contact
- Sharing sex toys
- Mutual masturbation

Using condoms can prevent STI transmission by preventing bodily fluids from entering someone's body and provide some covering of exposed skin.

Q: How will I know if I've got an STI?

Most people will not have any noticeable symptoms when they have an STI. The only way to be sure is to be tested. STIs can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation and number of sexual partners.

You should always get yourself checked out as soon as possible so that you don't pass anything on or cause yourself long-term harm. You may also need to consider emergency contraception to protect yourself from pregnancy.

Symptoms of STIs can include:

- Unusual green, yellow or smelly discharge from the vagina or penis
- Heavier periods or bleeding in-between periods
- Pain or a burning feeling when urinating
- Rashes, itching, burning, tingling around the genitals or anus
- Blisters or lumps around the genitals or anus
- Black powder or tiny white dots in your underwear
- Pain during sex for people with vaginas
- Lower abdominal pain for people with vaginas

If you have any of these symptoms, please book an appointment with a clinician by calling **020 7267 4792**.

Otherwise, you can come to our drop-in clinic for a self-test kit. Please call ahead to check what times this will be available.

Q: What tests do you do at Brandon Centre? Can I test for EVERYTHING?

We will usually test you for the following:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhoea
- HIV
- Syphilis

If you have visible symptoms, we will offer an examination of the affected area to determine if you have genital herpes, genital warts or pubic lice.

We can advise you about other clinics that offer a wider range of STI tests, if you need it.

Q: What will an STI test involve?

There are two main tests for sexually transmitted infections that we offer at the Brandon Centre. These are a:

- urine sample or self-swab for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea
- finger-prick blood test for HIV and Syphilis

Urine tests: A urine sample involves weeing into a small pot which we will give you.

Self-swab: A self-swab is like a small cotton bud which is put into the vagina and rotated gently to touch the vaginal walls. This is done privately by yourself.

It is recommended that people with vaginas complete a self-swab for a more accurate result. However, they can do a urine sample if they prefer.

Blood test: A small amount of blood is collected by finger prick. The blood is collected in a small pipette and transferred to the test device. This is an instant test, meaning you should receive your results within a few minutes of taking the sample.

Herpes Swab: If you have visible symptoms, we will offer an examination of the affected area. A swab, which is like a small cotton bud is used to collect fluid and cells from a herpes sore. This will be sent off to a lab to determine if you have genital herpes.

A urine sample or swab will be sent off to a lab and you will receive a text within 2 weeks with your result. Your result will either be positive (you have an STI and need treatment) or negative (you do not have an STI). Sometimes there may not have been enough of the sample to test and so we will invite you back in to do the test again.

The finger-prick blood test will give a result on the day. It will show up as 'reactive' or 'non-reactive'. A reactive result does not mean you have HIV or Syphilis, just that we need to refer you for more tests. A non-reactive result means you do not have HIV or Syphilis.

Q: Will someone have to look at my genitals?

Depending on your symptoms, you may be offered an examination. This is when a clinician can look at your genitals to examine your symptoms more clearly.

Examinations are completely optional, and you can decline (say no) to this option. If you do decide that you want an examination, you will be offered a chaperone.

Q: What is a chaperone?

A chaperone is there to protect both you and the clinician whilst an intimate examination is taking place. They are there to ensure that you feel comfortable during the examination. A chaperone will also ensure that the doctor or nurse is completing the examination how they should, and to help where necessary.

Q: How long will I wait for STI test results?

A test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea will be sent off to a lab and you will receive a text within 2 weeks with your result. Your result will either be positive (you have an STI and need treatment) or negative (you do not have an STI). Sometimes there may not have been enough of the sample to test and so we will invite you back in to do the test again.

Q: What happens if I test positive?

If you test positive for an STI, one of our Clinicians or sexual health support workers will phone you to explain which infection you tested positive for, tell you what the infection is and explain how it is managed or treated. You will be booked to come into the clinic for treatment.

On the day of your treatment, the clinician will explain to you in detail how the treatment will work and what you must do.

Q: Can you get rid of STIs?

All STIs are treatable and some can be cured.

Most STIs, including the most common Chlamydia, are cured with a short course of antibiotics.

Other STIs, like HIV, are treated with medication to stop them from getting worse but cannot be cured. This medication can result in the HIV virus becoming undetectable. Once this happens, you cannot pass HIV on to others.

Skin infections such as genital herpes and genital warts will have the symptoms managed if they have outbreaks. The infection cannot be cured but can be treated.

Q: Do I have to tell my partner if I have an STI?

You are not required by law to inform your partner if you have an STI. However, we do encourage you to tell your current and any recent sexual partners so they can also access treatment.

There are ways to inform your partner anonymously if you are worried. If you would like to know more information about this, please contact us on **0207 267 4792**.

Q: Can you get sexually transmitted infections from oral sex?

Yes. The most common STIs passed on through oral sex are:

- Genital herpes
- Gonorrhoea
- Syphilis

Other infections, such as chlamydia and genital warts can be passed on through oral sex, but this is far less likely.

To reduce the risk of infection, you can use a condom for oral sex on a penis. Flavoured condoms are available for free at Brandon Centre and via the C-Card scheme.

Dental dams (a square sheet of latex) can be used when performing oral sex on a vulva or anus. Unfortunately, we cannot currently offer dental dams due to the products failing recent quality tests. We are continuing to look into this and hope to provide these in future.

Pregnancy

Q: I am worried I might be pregnant and don't know what to do.

If you are pregnant, we will help talk through your options; you don't need to make a decision immediately.

If you decide that you want an abortion, we can help you arrange an appointment at a specialist clinic or hospital. We can also offer advice if you choose to continue with the pregnancy.

You can come to Brandon Centre during our drop-in hours to see one of our sexual health support workers for some advice and a pregnancy test. Please call **0207 267 4792** beforehand to confirm drop-in hours.

Q: How do you do a pregnancy test?

You will be asked to provide a urine sample (pee in a pot) and the sexual health support worker will dip in a test stick. The test is looking for the hormone human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG) which is present in the wee of someone who is pregnant.

It takes a while for this hormone to build up in the body so it is best to test three weeks (or 21 days) after unprotected sex or straight after your period should have been due (whichever is sooner).

If you test before this time, the result could be incorrect as there may not be enough of the pregnancy hormone to show up in your urine.

The test will display either a 'positive' or 'negative' result.

If the test is positive

A positive result means that you are almost definitely pregnant. If you're pregnant it's you who gets to decide if you want to continue or end the pregnancy. Our staff are there to support you, whatever you choose, and can speak about your options with you.

If the test is negative

A negative result means you probably aren't pregnant. But it could also be that the hormone is not yet detectable, or we have tested too soon.

If the test is negative, but still don't have your period when you expect it to, we recommend that you come back and take another pregnancy test a week later.

This might also be a good time to talk to someone about contraception, if you weren't trying to get pregnant.

You can take a pregnancy test for free at Brandon Centre with our sexual health support workers or clinicians. We can support you through the process, discuss your pregnancy options, contraception methods available to you as well as perform an STI test.

Q: I'm pregnant, do I have to tell my parents?

No, if you are pregnant you don't have to tell your parents, even if you are under 16. However, we do encourage you to inform someone over 18 that you trust, if it is possible.

Please note that termination services usually require an adult (someone who is over 18) to accompany you to and from your procedure. (Waiting for Helen to update answer)

Q: I'm pregnant, do I have to tell my GP?

You might be tempted to keep your pregnancy secret whilst you pluck the courage to tell your parents or partner, but it is important to get good medical care and advice early on in pregnancy. As soon as possible, talk to a medical professional who can help you and will keep your conversation confidential.

Q: Do you do abortions at Brandon Centre?

The Brandon Centre does not perform abortion procedures, but we can talk through your options if you are pregnant and help arrange an appointment at a specialist clinic if you decide to terminate the pregnancy.

You can also arrange your appointment yourself by calling the Central Booking Service - (include number?).

Q: Will an abortion affect my fertility?

No, having an abortion will not usually affect your chances of becoming pregnant and having normal pregnancies in the future. There's a very small risk to your fertility and future pregnancies if you develop a womb infection during the procedure that's not treated promptly. These infections are usually treated quickly.

You are fertile immediately after an abortion, so contraception will be discussed before the procedure and provided to you at the procedure. You are able to discuss the range of contraception options with us at the Brandon Centre at any stage of the process.

I'm a professional...

Training

Q: I work with young people under 25, is there any training available around sexual health?

The Brandon Centre as part of the Camish Network offers free training for professionals working with young people in Camden and Islington.

We currently offer the following 1 day courses:

- Introduction to talking to young people about sexual health – CPD Accredited (Part 1 of C-Card Training or standalone course)
- C-Card Condom Distribution Scheme Training (Part 2)
- Young People and Relationships
- Young People and Pornography
- Working with LGBTQ+ Young People

These can be booked through Eventbrite - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/the-brandon-centre-18254300863>

Trained C-Card practitioners may attend a 3-hour Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea Testing training at Brandon Centre to be able to offer self-testing kits for free alongside C-Card. Please contact the Education and Outreach Coordinator, Eleanor Grace, at eleanorcalver@brandoncentre.org.uk.

If you require more information about a course or would like to inquire about bespoke training, please contact the Education and Outreach Coordinator, Eleanor Grace, at eleanorcalver@brandoncentre.org.uk.

Q: Can you train my whole team?

Our training is available across the two boroughs to all professionals working with young people. However, there is a limit on spaces for each training per organisation.

If you would like your whole team or organisation to be trained in-house, our Education and Outreach Coordinator would be happy to discuss the options available. In-house or bespoke training will incur a fee.

Q: Do you do any other courses?

Currently, these are the courses available free to professionals in Camden and Islington. However, we are constantly reviewing and developing our offer. If you would like to discuss your training needs with us, please contact the Education and Outreach Coordinator, Eleanor Grace, at eleanorcalver@brandoncentre.org.uk.

In-house or bespoke training will incur a fee.

Q: I work with young people; can I give out condoms at my service?

Professionals working with young people in Camden and Islington can attend our 2-day training to be able to distribute condoms.

The Come Correct (or CCard) scheme provides access to free condoms, dams and lubricant in a variety of locations across London. Once registered, young people aged 13-24 can collect condoms or get advice from any Outlet displaying the Come Correct logo. Young people are also offered a 'self-test' for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea, and are informed about the local network of sexual health clinics.

All professionals wanting to become Come Correct practitioners receive free training delivered by experienced facilitators on:

- Talking to young people about sexual health
- How to deliver the Come Correct condom distribution scheme
- You will be provided with all the materials needed to deliver the scheme for free, including:
 - Condoms (external and internal) and lubricants
 - Condom demonstrators
 - C Cards

You will receive ongoing support with all aspects of the scheme from our C-Card coordinator for Camden and Islington.

Q: I don't work in Camden or Islington, can I come to your training?

Unfortunately, our training is only available to professionals working with young people in Camden and Islington.

Please get in contact if you would like to discuss any bespoke, paid for, training sessions with us. Our Education and Outreach Coordinator, Eleanor Grace, would be happy to discuss. eleanorcalver@brandoncentre.org.uk.

Q: What else can the network provide?

We can support you to:

- Run drop-in health promotion sessions for young people at your site where they can register for the C-Card scheme and receive information about sex and relationships
- Facilitate workshops for young people about sex and relationships