

Service Offer Info Sheet

Essex Sexual Health Service provide free access to advice, contraception, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, regardless of the immigration status of people living in Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock).

Consent

The legal age to consent (agree) to sex in the UK, regardless of your sexuality, is 16. People aged 13 to 16 can still access confidential sexual health services, however extra conversations are needed with a professional to help to keep you safe. If you are 12 years old or younger and have had sex, this would be classed as statutory rape, as you cannot consent to sex at this age.

If someone does not agree to sex, or is pressured, blackmailed, or manipulated into having sex, this would be classed as sexual assault or rape and is punishable by law.

Unplanned Pregnancy

Pregnancy tests are also available for free from Essex Sexual Health Service.

If you have an unplanned pregnancy, there are options and support available. Options include continuing with the pregnancy, having a termination to end the pregnancy, and putting the baby for adoption once they are born. It is your choice how to proceed, and no one should pressure you to make a decision you do not feel happy with.

The earlier you seek help, the more options you will have available. If you decide you do not wish to continue with the pregnancy, there are free services that can support you, and Essex Sexual Health Service can support to refer you.

For more information or support around unplanned pregnancy please visit

 msichoices.org or call  **020 7636 6200**

Face to face services

Our team are friendly, non-judgemental and are here to support you. Your appointment will be confidential and information you give the staff will not be shared without your permission. To find your nearest clinic and book an appointment, please call  **0300 003 1212**.

You can also book an appointment online using our online portal:

 pcic.myphr.online

If you require interpretation services for any reason, our team are available to provide this for you during your appointments.



QR Links:

MSI choices



Online Portal



Contraception

Contraception methods are tools that can help to prevent a pregnancy from occurring. Some also help prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

These are all available for free from Essex Sexual Health Service clinics, and condoms can also be accessed for free by post (requested through our online portal at pcic.myphr.online).

QR Links:

Online Portal



Contraception type	Prevents pregnancy	Prevents STIs	Use
Emergency Hormone Contraception (EHC)	✓	✗	EHC can be used if you have had any unprotected sex where there is a pregnancy risk. This includes having unprotected sex whilst also having missed a dose of your regular contraceptive pill, or a condom has split/not been used.
The Pill	✓	✗	A hormonal pill that is taken daily.
Implant	✓	✗	A small plastic rod that is put under the skin of your arm, this lasts 3 years.
IUD or IUS	✓	✗	A small t-shaped device that is put in your womb to help prevent pregnancy, this lasts for up to 8 years. An IUD can last up to 10 years, and can also be used as emergency contraception.
Patch	✓	✗	A small square patch that you wear on your skin for 7 days, then you replace with a new one.
Condoms	✓	✓	A barrier contraceptive - stops exchanging of bodily fluids and skin to skin contact.
Internal condoms	✓	✓	A thin pouch that can be inserted in the vagina or anus to prevent skin to skin contact reduce the chance of STI transmission



Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

The service can test for a range of different STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV. Some of these STIs are symptomless, so it is important to test if you have had a new sexual partner or have not been tested in a while, even if you have not changed partners. Bacterial STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis, can be cleared with antibiotics.

Although not all STIs can be cured, all STIs can be treated to relieve symptoms and reduce transmission risk through medication. If you are diagnosed with an STI, medication is free, and your results will not be shared without your permission. If you are having regular unprotected sex, please see a practitioner at your local sexual health clinic for more information on how to prevent STIs and keep yourself safe.

Some STIs can be prevented by taking specific medications, such as PrEP and DoxyPEP, or by vaccinations. If you are having regular unprotected sex, or if you are a man having sex with other men it may be worth asking your local sexual health clinic for more information on how to prevent STIs and HIV.

Speak to one of our staff if you would like to know more about how to keep safe.

Online services

If you live in Essex (Excluding Southend and Thurrock) you can order a free STI test to complete in the comfort of your own home. Kits are delivered through your letterbox in small, discreet packaging. The kits contain everything you need to take a sample, with detailed instructions inside, alongside a free postal kit for you to send it back to our lab for testing. Once your samples have been analysed, you can then access your results through your online Personal Health Record account.

To access these services, log in to our online portal, request a kit and enter the address you would like it discreetly sent to.

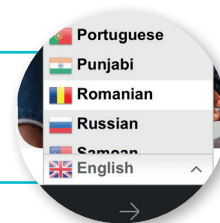
Find out more here:  essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk/self-test

QR Links:

Book self-test



Our website has the option to **change the language** to a language of your choice at the bottom left hand corner of the page.



If you do require treatment after you have tested, this is also provided for free.

If you are over 25 years old, you can also order condoms by post through this platform, and book appointments online.

Young People

16-24 year olds can access free condoms weekly through the eC-Card app, and can be collected from a variety of locations across Essex. Visit our website to download the app:  ec-card.org.uk

For young people looking for more information, our young person centred website contains extra information around healthy relationships, consent and sex:  askingforafriend.org.uk

Sex workers

Essex Sexual Health Service's Umbrella Project provides support and services for sex workers in Essex, offering specialist care packages and information. For more information, please visit:

 essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk/umbrella

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation, often called FGM, is the intentional procedure to remove some or all of a young girls' genitals for no medical reason. This is often completed by a young person's family member without proper medical devices or pain medication. It is a violation of human rights worldwide and in the UK is considered to be a serious form of child abuse.

In the UK there is legislation called the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 which makes it illegal to:

-  Perform FGM in the UK
-  Assist, aid, or encourage FGM
-  Take a young person abroad (or arrange for them to be taken abroad) to have FGM performed
-  Fail to protect a girl from FGM if you are responsible for her (added in 2015)

This applies even if the procedure happens outside the UK.

Committing these crimes can have offenders facing up to 14 years in prison.

FGM Procedure can often cause severe pain, and due to the lack of medical sterilisation and equipment it often leads to infection. It can also cause long term health problems such as menstruation, urination and pregnancy issues. Furthermore, due to facing this trauma, young people tend to develop or display mental health side effects such as anxiety, shame and lack of trust for those around them. FGM permanently alters the body, meaning that there is no way to reverse this act once it has taken place.

For support or queries relating to FGM visit  nationalfgmcentre.org.uk or call  **0208 498 7137**

QR Links:

eC-Card



Asking for a friend



ESHS Umbrella Project



QR Links:

National FGM Centre



Rape and sexual abuse support

If you are concerned about the type of sex you are having, speak to one of our team who will be able to support you, alternatively you can contact Synergy on ☎ **0300 003 7777** or visit 🖱 synergyessex.org.uk

If you think you have been sexually assaulted or raped, you can also contact the police through ☎ **111**, or if you feel you are in immediate danger you can call ☎ **999** for urgent support.

QR Links:

synergy
ESSEX



Alternative languages

This document is available in these languages:



Arabic



Kurdish (Kurmanji) and (Sorani)



Tigrinya



Pashto



Farsi (Persian)

For alternative language requests please contact:

🖱 provide.eshsoutreachteam@nhs.net



Easy Read

We have information on relationships, sexual health and pregnancy in Easy Read format on our website:

🖱 eshs.org.uk/resource-hub/#easy-read

QR Links:

Easy Read

