

# A practical guide to applying the Fraser Guidelines to Sexual Health Services

## Background

The Fraser Guidelines are for all professionals offering sexual health education, information, advice and clinical and support services to young people under 16. The 'Fraser Guidelines' are considered good practice in providing young people under 16 with sexual health advice and services and can be utilised by all professionals working with young people to improve their sexual health and wellbeing. When offering sexual health information and support services professionals must follow Safeguarding Procedures if it is known or suspected that the young person, or other young people are at risk of significant harm.

## Why it matters

Professionals need to consider how to balance children's rights and wishes with their responsibility to keep children safe from harm. The child's safety is paramount. Child protection concerns must always be shared with the relevant agencies, even if this goes against the child's wishes. Underage sexual activity is a possible indicator of child sexual exploitation and children who have been groomed may not realise they are being abused. Sexual activity with a child under 13 is a criminal offence and should always result in a child protection referral.

## Questions to Consider - Have I:

- Consulted anyone else
- Made a safeguarding assessment
- Decided that they can understand the implications of the information, advice or services I am providing
- Decided exactly in what ways their physical emotional and mental health would suffer if I did not provide this service
- Decided that it is in their best interests to provide the information, advice or service
- Decided that they are 'Fraser Competent'
- Got any reservations about their understanding of any possible consequences
- Made an adequate record
- Considered if signposting or referral to another service is indicated

## Questions to Consider - Have I:

- Given the young person time to speak and ask questions
- Maintained good eye contact and listened to the young person
- Made any assumptions about their ability and sexuality
- Given them all the information I consider relevant to their situation
- Explained things clearly and simply
- Considered all the available options
- Explained reasons for proposed treatment/actions including risks benefits and alternatives
- Explored any cultural or religious issues
- Explored their relationship with their parents/carers



- Able to retain any information I have given them long enough to decide what to do
- In a situation that requires some kind of action even if I decide they are not competent to consent to what they request (eg pregnant but not competent to consent to a termination of pregnancy)
- Taking risks – and are any of the risks having a negative impact on their sexual health and wellbeing
- In need of services other than those I can directly provide

## The Guidelines

- The young person understands the advice being given and has sufficient maturity to understand what is involved
- The young person cannot be persuaded to inform or seek support from their parents and will not allow the worker to tell them they are being given contraceptive treatment/sexual health advice.
- The young person is likely to begin or continue to engage in sexual activity with or without contraceptive treatment/sexual health advice.
- The young person's physical or mental health are likely to suffer unless he or she received contraceptive/sexual health advice or treatment.

The guidelines state that contraceptive advice or treatment can be provided to a child under 16 without parental consent or knowledge provided that the health-care professional is satisfied using the following:

### Is the Young person:

- Giving eye contact, listening & involved in the discussion
- Clear about what they want and asking relevant questions
- Able to repeat back the main points of what I have said
- Able to talk about any other relevant information they have and where they learned it
- Able to apply the information to their own situation
- Able to talk to parents/carers about their situation and do they want to Sexually active and likely to continue to be so with or without any information advice and services I give them