

Sexual Health

Sexual health is not equally distributed within the population with women, gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), the trans community, young people, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds experiencing the biggest burden of poor sexual health.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to measures which influenced sexual behaviour and health service provision and changed the way many services were offered, with a shift to online and tele-consultations and online testing for HIV and asymptomatic STIs (sexually transmitted infections) increasing.

Overall the population of Somerset experiences good sexual health relative to the rest of England and many areas in the South West. Rates of new STI diagnoses and HIV prevalence is comparatively low, whilst uptake of the most effective forms of contraception are generally higher.

However, despite this there remain inequalities in both knowledge of sexual health and in access to sexual health services. Uptake of chlamydia screening by young people remains below that recommended impacting on identification and treatment. Whilst HIV prevalence is low, the percentage of those who are diagnosed late with HIV remains persistently high, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased risk of transmission.

Significant progress has been made in reducing teenage conceptions but some areas still see higher numbers of teenagers becoming pregnant, and surveys of young people demonstrate a lack of knowledge of the services available to them. In addition sexual health services are experiencing increasingly higher numbers of attendances and demands on their services than ever before.

For information on sexual health in Somerset please see the [Somerset Sexual Health Needs Assessment 2023](#),

Further Information

- See also our [Pregnancy and Maternity](#) section
- For cervical cancer data, please see our [Cancer](#) section