



## **Policy**

a) Sexual Health West provides condoms to the general public free of charge

b) Distributing condoms to the general public and in particular marginalised/at risk groups group is an effective and practical way of preventing sexual infections, and also offers Sexual Health West useful opportunities for sexual health promotion in safe and informal settings. We also provide general information on contraception. In the case of young people, we would refer them to their doctor or family planning clinic also for specific help.

c) We recognise that the public (including young people) can buy condoms at pharmacies and other outlets. Equally Sexual Health West is aware that the law in relation to the provision of condoms to young people below the age of 16<sup>1</sup> or 17<sup>2</sup> is particularly unclear. Accordingly, in the absence of Irish legal guidance and in line with common practice in Irish healthcare, staff of Sexual Health West will consider the best interests of the young person and will be guided by the Fraser Guidelines<sup>3</sup>, which advises that condoms and contraceptive can be supplied to young people provided that:

- The young person is deemed Gillick competent, that is they understand the advice and have sufficient maturity to understand its moral, social and emotional implications.
- The person providing the advice and /or condoms should not persuade the young person to inform their parents, or persuade the young person to allow the staff member to inform their parents that they are seeking contraceptive advice.
- The young person is very likely to begin or continue having sexual intercourse with or without contraceptive support and would be at risk of pregnancy or sexual infections.

## **Sexual Health West distributes condoms by a number of different means:**

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<sup>1</sup>The age by virtue of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997, at which a young person can consent to medical treatment

<sup>2</sup>The age at which a young person is capable of giving valid consent to penetrative sexual acts.

<sup>3</sup>"Fraser Guidelines" are widely followed in England by health care professionals in the context of contraceptive advice, and have also formed the basis for comparable mature minor guidance in other States.

- Via Outreach programs such as gay bars/clubs, asylum hostels and to other potentially high-risk sectors
- Via student union groups, at 3<sup>rd</sup> level events such as fairs, SHAG week
- By special request for organised events, seminars, launches
- At Sexual Health West information stands at various events
- They are also available at our offices
- As a result of temporary office closure as per government guidelines in March 2020 SHW developed a condom and lubricant mailing campaign
- In an attempt to ensure we reach out to service users in need of protection, we provide a service of mailing directly to the requesters address
- We will be continuing the campaign while exercising the full caution of Sexual Health West condom policy through our mailing service.
- Sexual Health West is in full compliance with the HSE National Condom Distribution guidance and terms and conditions.