

Hundreds of teens could be carrying STIs

By Greg Burns, Thursday 10 April 2008, Bucks Advertiser

Hundreds of teenage boys could be carrying sexually transmitted infections without realising it, according to sexual health practitioners in the country.

This follows the revelation that over 1000 more girls than boys under 18 were treated for sexually transmitted infections at South Bucks hospitals in 2007.

The figures received from the Bucks NHS Trust, in answer to a freedom of Information requested, show that 1,304 girls under 18 were treated from STIs at Amersham Hospital, Stoke Mandeville Hospital and Wycombe Hospital last year compared with only 265 boys.

That trend is also evident in figures for men and women over 18, with 5,563 women over 18 and 4,522 men over 18 treated for STIs in 2007.

Professor Clive Loveday of leading sexual health clinic, The Practice, based in Chalfont St. Peter and Greta Missenden, said: "Based on these figures, it is certain that a significant proportion of boys will have an STU and will not know it.

"Girls under 18 tend to be more mature than boys of the same age and have a more mature attitude to their sexual health and seeking regular checks. Girls are likely to have sexual partners who are older and therefore pose a greater risk of passing on and STI.

"Awareness of STIs and the impact on fertility is higher in females due to regular coverage in women's magazines with high readership among young girls."

National trends have seen dramatic rises in cases of STIs, with one in nine young people likely to have one, cases of Chlamydia up by 200 per cent and gonorrhoea up by 139 per cent. Diagnosing and treating STIs in the country cost £647,000 last year.

Bucks Primary Care Trust worked with different groups, including the County Council, youth groups and schools to lower the figures.

A Bucks PCT spokesperson said: "The consequences of poor sexual health, including unwanted pregnancies or pregnancy among under 18s or long-term ill-health as a result of infections can have a major impact on the lives of individuals, affecting their education, employment prospects and housing.

"The PCT works on a multi-agency way to deliver sexual health services and promote safe sex messages to young people in Bucks, supporting and implementing national programmes such as the Chlamydia Screening Programme, and leading on local initiatives, such as the distribution of condoms and condom training."

The Practice offers full sexual health screening, free condoms and treatment. It has launched a hard-hitting advertising campaign to raise awareness of the issues.

For more information visit www.begoodinbed.co.uk or call 01494 690980 for a free and confidential sexual health check.