

STI risk among young people and queer men is on the rise.

Gay and bisexual men, and young people, are among those most at risk of getting an STI, according to a report.

Public Health England (PHE) reported that a case of chlamydia or gonorrhoea is diagnosed in a young person every four minutes, in 2017 over 144,000 cases of these diseases were reported in people aged 15-24 years old.

In 2015, there was 434,456 STI's reported and 54,275 of them were in men who had sex with other men. That's a 10% increase on the previous year.

Dr Gwenda Hughes, Head of STI Surveillance at PHE said:

"The new statistics show STI rates are still very high among gay men and young adults. We need to do more to raise awareness about STIs and how they can be prevented, especially the effectiveness of using condoms."

The average age at which young men have their first sexual experience with other men is 17 ½ compared to 15.9 years for young heterosexual women, and 14.9 for young heterosexual men, according to Natsal 2000.

There are many suggestions as to why the STI rates are still so high with young people and queer men, and the obvious answer is lack of education on the dangers that unprotected sex can have, as well as how to go about getting checked for an STI.

FPA, a sexual health charity said:
"FPA believes that young people need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to develop sexual behaviour

that is safe and enjoyable for them and their sexual partners."

It is widely acknowledged among young people that SRE (sex and relationships education) is currently lacking in state education in England. Specifically, for LGBT+ pupils, who are often forced to participate in education that is not relevant to them.

In Scotland earlier this year, there was a landmark change that put LGBT education officially into the curriculum, including efficient SRE lessons tailored to the issues that LGBT+ people could face when they become/if they are sexually active.

From 2020, sex education will be made compulsory in all British schools, currently only local-authority run schools (which make up 1/3 of all British schools) are offered SRE.

It is thought that the changes will help to promote a positive sexual attitude among young people, as well as increasing education on STI's, symptoms, and how to get checked.