



# Restricted launch for Postal Testing Kits (PTKs)

## Guidance for Healthy Respect service partners

Providing PTKs to young people  
aged 13-18 and those 19+ with  
additional vulnerabilities



Supporting young people's sexual health

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## 1. What are PTKs?

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Healthy Respect's Postal Testing Kits (PTKs) allow service users to post a sample to be tested for Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea, two common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Both are bacterial infections which can be passed on by unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

The aim is to make STI testing easy and accessible to young people 13-18 years and those 19-25 years with additional vulnerabilities through a targeted re-launch of Postal Testing Kits (PTKs) to our current Healthy Respect school and community youth partner services.

Service users will be encouraged to take the test, supported by a trusted adult.

We have updated and re-packaged PTKs with new leaflets to create two kits for:

1. People with a penis (urine test)
2. People with a vagina (vaginal swab test)

**The PTK uses a urine or swab sample so will not detect oral or anal infections.**

Young people may not know that STIs can occur in different parts of the body, so it is important to have an open conversation about the type of sex they have had, and to explain how the PTK works.

When discussing sexual health and STIs it's important to avoid making assumptions or judgements, and to mention anal sex when talking to young people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Healthy Respect will supply (for free to our partners) a stock of PTKs, provide training and ask you to use Healthy Respect tick sheet recording forms to monitor PTK use.

## 2. Why test for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea?

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**Chlamydia is the most common STI in Scotland.** Over 70% of people who have the infection are aged 30 or less. Most people do not experience symptoms. Chlamydia can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics. In some cases, untreated Chlamydia infections will clear up naturally. Very rarely untreated infection can cause complications that may lead to infertility.


**Cases of gonorrhoea were steadily increasing** prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but have increased rapidly since the end of 2021. There has been an 80% increase in infections among young men and women aged under 20 between 2018 and 2022. (*Public health briefing paper to Association of Directors of Education (ADES)*).

Gonorrhoea can be treated with a course of antibiotics. If untreated, Gonorrhoea can occasionally lead to complications including Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), and pain and swelling in the testicles.

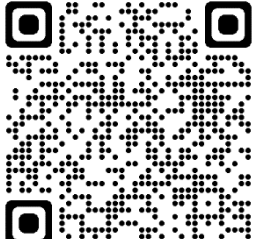
### 3. When PTK's are not suitable.

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PTKs are **not** recommended for service users who:

- **Are experiencing symptoms.**  
If symptomatic but will not attend clinic, advice is still can offer test. However in this scenario clinic would treat empirically so could delay patient being more comfortable.
- **Are pregnant.**
- **Higher risk** if identify as gay, bisexual, men who have sex with men (GBMSM), for those who have multiple partners or take part in group sex. Also, some trans and non-binary people who are in similar sexual networks to GBMSM.  
Having unprotected anal sex (anal sex with no condom), there is higher risk of other STIs, and blood borne viruses (BBVs), as the lining of the anus is thin and tears easily, which makes it more vulnerable to infection.
- **Are 19+ with no additional vulnerabilities.**  
STI and BBV testing for adults (age 19+) **who have symptoms** remains available via appointment at sexual health clinics.  
  
**For those with no symptoms** signpost to how to order a home self-sampling kit (SSK), or to book a No-Talk Testing clinic appointment (if you have no symptoms),  
  
Scan QR code or visit <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/no-symptom-sti-testing/>
- **have completed treatment for Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea in the past 6 weeks.**

**If not suitable for PTK, but need support, signpost them to clinical services:**

- For age 13-18 <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/young-people/>
- For age 19+ <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/clinics-2/>.
- **For gay, bisexual, other men who have sex with men, trans or non-binary and over 16** they can choose to access ROAM team or further support and advice on STI testing, vaccinations or PrEP (This is a medicine to prevent [HIV](#) (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection.
- **Key messages to give;** Signpost for testing; using lube can make vaginal and anal sex safer (and more pleasurable for the person receiving it) and using a condom will protect both partners from infection.  
Anyone who believes they may have been **exposed to HIV** should visit a sexual health clinic as soon as possible.  


Scan OR code or visit **ROAM** <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/men-who-have-sex-with-men/roam-team/>

#### 4. Supporting a young person to take a PTK test in your setting.

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Healthy Respect's PTKs are intended for young people ages 13+ and those 19-25 with additional vulnerabilities who may need enhanced support to access services.

**They must be completed and sent to lab with the support of a worker.**

It is great when young people take responsibility for their sexual health, and/or consider testing when in a new relationship. PTKs are a valuable tool for raising STI awareness and providing accessible testing for those who would not or cannot access a clinic.

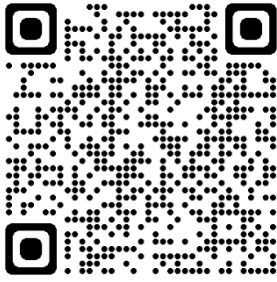
**It is important to carry out a full consultation to find out if a PTK is right for them. Below is a set of questions to help structure your conversation:**

"We can support you to complete this test. To make sure we are doing it at right time and doing the right test, I need to ask you some questions:

- Have you ever had **unprotected sex** (sex without using a condom)?
- What **type of sex** do you have? Vaginal, oral, anal?  
The PTK uses a urine or swab sample so will not detect oral or anal infections. It will only detect an STI from vaginal/penile sex.
- **Are your sexual partner's male, female, non-binary or all?**
- **Are they regular partners or casual?**
- **How old are your sexual partners usually? Do you have unprotected anal sex (anal sex with no condom).**

There is a higher risk of other STIs, and blood borne viruses (BBVs), as the lining of the anus is thin and tears easily, which makes it more vulnerable to infection. If they or their partner is GBMSM, let them know about their nearest <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/young-people/> or if over 16 about [ROAM](#) where they can get further advice on STI testing, PrEP, vaccinations.

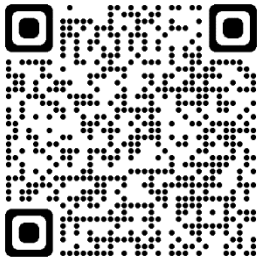
- **If they do not want to tell you, explain how the PTK works**, so they can make their own decision about whether it is the right option for them **signpost to their nearest appropriate services outlined on the next page.**
- **If a young person with a vagina does not want to take a swab test**, a urine test can be offered but do advise that the pickup rate of infection is much lower. Best approach would be support them **to access the nearest appropriate service outlined on the next page.**



**HR+ young people's clinic**

**Age 13+** scan QR code or visit

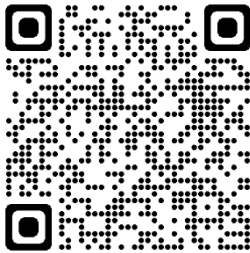
<https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/young-people/>



**Local clinics in Lothian**

**Age 19+** scan QR code or visit

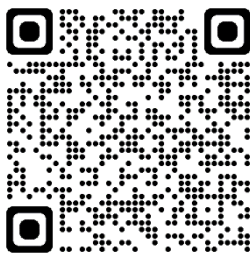
<https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/clinics-2/>



**ROAM**

If they or their partner is **GBMSM** and over **16+** scan QR code or visit <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/men-who-have-sex-with-men/roam-team/>

For further advice on STI testing, PrEP, vaccinations.



**Self-sampling kit (SSK), or to book No-Talk Testing appointment.**

**Age 19+ with no additional vulnerabilities and have symptoms.**

Scan QR code or visit <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/no-symptom-sti-testing/>

## 5. Returning PTKs

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There are 2 methods for returning PTKs.

### 5.1 NHS lab couriers and vans

We encourage everyone to try to return kits, using NHS lab return boxes, based in Health Centres. This is to save on cardboard boxes and postage.

**Place everything in the labelled plastic bag, seal and inform reception staff it is to go to Virology Department, Laboratory reception using NHS lab couriers and vans.**

### 5.2 Royal Mail post box (pre-paid postage within cardboard box)

School-based and community-based partner services can use cardboard boxes with pre-paid postage label if returning PTKs out of office hours, which is outlined within leaflets.

**Place everything in the cardboard box and seal with security seal sticker.**

## 6. Recording and follow up.

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PTKs are most effective when a young person has been supported to use, post the PTK, and find out their result.

**We advise the following good practice:**

- **On the lab form**
  - ✓ Ask them to put their name and mobile number.
  - ✓ It is a good idea to take a picture of this number or save it under their contacts under PTK.
  - ✓ With the young person's consent, write your organisational contact details under the address and c/o your name.
  - ✓ This information is confidential and stored separately to general health records.
- **It is vital you record this PTK reference number on Healthy Respect service recording tick sheet.** Record anonymously, date of test, PTK reference number and note to follow up.
- Reassure them the information is confidential and will not be shared with anyone else other than clinical staff at Chalmers.

Any conversations about STI risk or testing should be accompanied by a conversation about **protection** and, where relevant, **contraception** (including **emergency contraception** if within 5 days of unprotected vaginal sex) and **c:card** products should be offered.

**Child protection** risk assessments should be applied as standard in all conversations with young people about sexual activity, and all agencies should be following the national [Scottish Government Guidance on Underage Sexual Activity](#) and [Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-Agency Under-Age Sexual Activity Guidance, 2024; Reviewed 2027](#)



## 7. PTK results

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Results are normally available within 14 days of posting the test. Young people can phone the automated results line (0131 537 8893) and state your PTK reference number.

- Ideally the young person will have provided their phone number when they complete their PTK form. This will allow a Health Advisor to contact the young person if their test is positive and offer them the best treatment.
- Remind the young person they may get a text or call from an unknown number.
- Reassure them it is a confidential service, and their information will not be shared unless it is believed they are at risk of harm.
- If their result is negative, they will not be contacted.
- Please encourage them to use the automated results line rather than just waiting to see if they get a phone call. This will let them know that their test has been processed.

### If the result is positive

- young people ages 16+ may be offered a treatment voucher which they can use at a local pharmacy.
- Alternatively, the young person can attend a sexual health clinic or their GP for treatment.
- **young people under 16 years old must attend a service** for treatment.
- If after 3 attempts a young person under 16 cannot be contacted, a health adviser will contact the organisation/staff member involved in supporting the young person to complete the PTK.
- Again, reassure them it is a confidential service, and their information will not be shared with anyone else unless it is believed they are at risk of harm.

**Both Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea are bacterial infections which can be easily treated with antibiotics.**

## 8. Enhanced support accessing HR+ clinic.

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As highlighted in section 3, if a young person is experiencing symptoms; is at risk of anal STIs/BBVs they should be signposted directly to Healthy Respect + young people's clinic.

**Healthy Respect+ young peoples' clinics** are supported by youth workers who provide holistic sexual health and wellbeing support to young people.

**There are 5 in total across Lothian:**

- Chalmers Sexual Health Centre
- Pennywell
- Croft Street, Dalkeith
- Tranent
- 101 Youth Project at Livingston

Find a service at <https://www.lothiansexualhealth.scot/young-people/>

Partners who are working with vulnerable young people and/or those aged 19 -25 with additional vulnerabilities who find it difficult to access the treatment can use the following:

**Priority nurse mobile (number 07795 666 671)** to discuss support options to help the young person attend.

This is picked up by the senior nurse at Chalmers. You often have to leave a message, when calling, so it is useful to have permission to share young person's name and DOB, and let nurse know what HR+ drop-in would suit young person best.

**This number is for professional use only not to be shared with young people.**

**If a young person discloses a sexual assault or rape**, they should be signposted to a sexual health clinic where sensitive, specialist support and screening services are offered. More information can be found at <https://www.healthyrespect.co.uk/sexual-assault-and-rape/>

**For any questions about this guidance, and or Healthy Respect services please contact.**

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[www.healthyrespect.co.uk](http://www.healthyrespect.co.uk)