



Katie Whitehouse, information and participation officer

In safe hands



FOR young people growing up in a world full of social pressures, it is often difficult to find the right information about sex, or have an open conversation with someone you can completely trust.

But Middleton's team of sexual health specialists are there to make sure the town's under-25s are safe, informed, and comfortable with who they are and who they are in relationship with.

They provide confidential information on contraception, relationship issues, and sexually transmitted diseases – in fact, any aspect of emotional and sexual health.

Specialist worker Donna Williams emphasises that the service, run by Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Primary Care Trust, (HMR-PCT), strives to be as informal and relaxed as possible – and says they do much more than just give out condoms.

“We have that conversation around who you are having sex with. We always encourage young people to talk to their parents, and be open with them, if possible.

“We are totally non-judgemental, and because of this, we get people recommended to us constantly. If we see one young woman, she will probably tell her friends.

“Lots of young people just want information – and although a lot of them are sexually active, the majority aren't. The message is always to try and wait until they meet the right person. But we try and give them positive messages if that is what they want to do.”

The clinic, which is run from Boarshaw Primary School, offers information on terminations, and the team is also available for home visits and sex education talks in schools and colleges.

“We do a lot of work around teenagers self-esteem,” Donna says. “We have a campaign that is all about self-respect, and getting young people to ask themselves whether having sex is what they want to do, and whether it is the right thing to do. We don't give advice – instead, we give information.”

Donna adds that there is a lot of misinformation about exactly how much sex local teenagers are having – and she always encourages the teenagers she sees to make their own choices.

“All the young people say they think about 70 per cent of their peers are sexually active, when in reality it's about 30 per cent. Not everyone's doing it, but everyone's talking about it.

“It is no one else's business what your sex life is. It is personal and private. It is something that you don't have to share with anybody. Why do people have to know?”

One person who can vouch for how much the service can help is former Hopwood Hall College student, Sarah, 18, who came out as a lesbian when she was 17. She says Donna's support was invaluable in helping her come to terms with her sexuality.

“Donna's experienced in lesbian, gay and bisexual issues, so I went to speak to her about girls, and she helped me sort things out. They aren't just there for contraception, although they have given me some advice on that issue as well. She's great – she's always there for a talk. She's always very open about herself. I found it easy to talk to her. At first I was down about it, I wasn't doing so well at college, and my work was suffering. But now I've got enough points to go to university, and everything's going well.

“I really wanted to tell my parents about it, but when my mum asked me I found it hard to tell her, so I didn't. But when I did tell her, she said she loved me no matter what.”

■ Sarah is not her real name.

INFO BOX

DONNA and her colleagues are available at a clinic held at Boarshaw Primary School, Stanycliffe Lane, Boarshaw, 9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

People can drop in, but they are advised to call the office to see if there is anyone available before attending. To find out more and to make an appointment, call 01706 517613.



■ The Sentinel, PA, USA
North Middleton truck fight more than a year old

Last August, a group of North Middleton residents formed the Concerned Citizens for North Middleton Township to oppose plans for a motor freight terminal.

More than a year later, that fight with industrial developers Jack Shepley and John Van Buskirk continues, but the end may finally be near.

■ The Sentinel, PA, USA
Cigarette led to last week's house fire in North Middleton

A fire marshal's report said a cigarette tossed into mulch caused a fire Wednesday in North Middleton Township.

Michael Rugh, Pennsylvania State Police fire marshal, said no charges will be filed in connection with the fire that destroyed a home on the 100 block of Regal View Drive and resulted in no injuries.

The cause of the blaze appeared to be a cigarette discarded in the mulch by a member of the family, Rugh indicated. It was an accidental fire.

Philip Castle, owner of the burnt home, said Friday I really don't have much to say. It's just a disaster.

■ The Sentinel, PA, USA
Woman injured in North Middleton crash

Jenni Jones was taken to Carlisle Regional Medical Center with injuries following a crash in the 1600 block of Spring Road Monday, according to North Middleton Township police.

Jones, 68, was driving a 2007 Chevy Malibu north when she took her eyes off the road and hit a 1997 Mitsubishi 3000GT that was stopped for traffic at 2:37 p.m., police said. The driver of the Mitsubishi, 26-year-old Derek W etzel, was not hurt, police said.

■ Nova News, Nova Scotia, Canada
Truck falls off hoist narrowly missing garage employee

By the grace of God nobody was hurt. Those were the words of Bob Flynn whose Honda, Ridgeline truck fell off the hoist at the Irving station in Middleton just before lunch on Monday.

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Weather

Saturday

It will be a rather cloudy start with the chance of some patchy light rain or drizzle for a time. Staying cloudy through the afternoon, but becoming drier. Light southerly winds. Max temp 24C (75F).

Sunday

It looks set to be another largely cloudy day with limited brightness. There is also the chance of some rain or drizzle at times, the rain potentially heavy. Light, variable winds. Max temp 21C (70F).

UK Outlook

Saturday

It will be a largely cloudy day, especially in the north-west where there will be rain. The south may see some sunshine, but also thundery showers. Mainly dry elsewhere. Light winds. Max temp 26C (79F).

Sunday

Variable amounts of cloud and some sunshine for most. Southern Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England will have rain. Thundery showers across southern England. Light winds. Max temp 25C (77F).

Information supplied by **MeteoGroup**