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NEW CAMPAIGN MAKES CONTRACEPTION WORTH TALKING ABOUT

A new campaign will help young people to make more informed choices about contraception, look after their sexual health and avoid unwanted pregnancies.

The campaign aims to promote more open and honest discussions about sex, relationships and contraception among 16 to 24 year olds and their parents. Research shows that a lack of knowledge, and misinformation, coupled with poor attitudes and communication is currently hindering their safer sexual behaviour.

The first phase of the campaign, *Contraception. Worth Talking About* will increase young people's awareness of the different types of contraception and remind them that they won't be protected against STIs unless they use a condom.

Despite recent progress, with teenage births down 23 per cent to the lowest level for 15 years, there is still more to do. Research and evidence shows that better communication and more knowledgeable conversations about sexual health and relationships are crucial to helping people make informed choices and take care of their health.

The campaign will:

- give people the facts about sexual health;
- encourage people to talk about sex and contraception - research shows that open and honest conversations about sex and relationships can stop young people having sex too early;
- raise awareness of the range of contraception that can fit with different people's lifestyles; and
- encourage people to take a chlamydia test.

Gillan Merron, Public Health Minister, said:

"Sex still seems to be taboo – too many of us are holding back from having the open and honest conversations that young people need to make informed decisions, including about when it's right to have sex. There is a method of contraception to suit the lifestyle of everyone, and it's right to talk about these options.

"The Government's campaign is designed to change attitudes and show young people that having open conversations with their partners, friends, parents and health professionals is a must – it isn't something to be embarrassed about. We're striving for a culture of safer sex and better relationships."

Dawn Primarolo, Children's Minister said:

“We want to help young people to talk to their family and friends without feeling uncomfortable, so that they can improve their knowledge and understanding about sexual health and feel more confident to make the choices that are right for them.

“Through compulsory sex education at school and health advice to teenagers, we are supporting young people to delay early sex, and to make sure they use effective contraception when they do start having sex. This is vital if we are to keep teenage pregnancy rates on their downward trend, and to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.”

The first phase of the campaign, *Contraception. Worth Talking About*, aims to specifically prompt conversations about the range of contraceptive options open to teenagers and young adults. The campaign is backed-up by polling released earlier this month, showing:

- 92% of people cannot name the 15 types of contraception options available to them;
- nearly half of younger women (44% of 16-24 year olds) are not aware they might not be using contraception that is the best ‘fit’ for their age and lifestyle;
- one in five feel awkward discussing contraception with friends; and
- more than a quarter (26%) never discuss contraception with their partner and choose to opt for their current contraception without asking about the potential alternative options.

Unlike traditional Government campaigns, the *Contraception. Worth Talking About* advertising features no people – real or illustrated. Instead, the advertising will show snippets of ‘contraception conversations’ in speech bubbles, in a variety of everyday scenarios, such as in a shopping centre, or in front of the television.

The advertising has been tested with teenagers and parents, with a strong, positive response from both groups to the adverts.

Viewers will hear people chatting, and see matching words appear in speech bubbles. Each speech bubble represents a different person, and the shape and size of the bubble will give viewers a sense of the individuals having the conversations and how they are feeling. The advertising encourages people to explore the contraceptive choices available and to talk to a doctor or nurse to find a contraceptive that is right for them.

For straightforward information and advice to make it easier to discuss everything to do with sexual health visit: www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout

Notes to the Editors

Other key findings include

- Almost a quarter (23%) admit there are questions they’d like answers to about contraception and sexual health (female 23% and male 23%)

- Nearly a quarter of people (23%) chose their contraception without asking for the options first (female 21% and male 28%)
- More than a third (36%) of respondents would like to choose a contraception that helps them avoid forgetting to take it (female 41% and male 28%)
- Nearly half of women (46%) would consider a contraceptive suited to their lifestyle when choosing contraception in future

Populus interviewed over 2,000 adults aged 16 – 50 online between 16th and 20th October 2009. The data has been weighted to be representative of all adults aged 16 – 50 in England. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. For further information visit www.populus.co.uk