

Name of Moderator _____

Date _____

Attendees _____

Focus Group Topic Guide

Testing for sexually transmitted infections (STI): a study of patient preferences

Investigators: A Pollard, C Llewellyn

Focus group participants (summary sheet):

Demographics: age, sex, sexuality, employment status, highest educational qualification.

Introduction

Explanation of focus group

*Good afternoon/evening. My name is _____ and this is my colleague _____.
Describe who we are and where we work.
Thank participants for coming.*

Present the purpose

We are here today to ask you about your experiences of sexual health services specifically in relation to testing for sexually transmitted infections (otherwise called STIs, STDs, venereal disease etc). How you think services could be improved and how you think things could be done differently. The purpose is to get your experiences – and your suggestions. My colleague and I are not here to give you information or ideas – we really want to hear about your views. Your experiences and ideas are what matter.

There are no right or wrong answers. You can disagree with each other, and you can change your mind. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think.

Discuss procedure

The group will last for approximately one hour and you will be given £20 as a thank you for your time.

We will be taking notes and tape recording the discussion so that we don't miss anything you have to say, and everything we write down is anonymous and confidential. These procedures were explained to you when we set up this group but can I just confirm that everyone gives their permission for the recorder to be used?

Everyone here has been to a sexual health clinic at least once in the last two years. I invite everyone to be as frank as they feel comfortable, but please do not feel that you have to reveal anything you don't feel comfortable sharing.

You must not reveal anything that you hear in this session outside of this room. Please respect other's privacy – as they respect yours.

Feel free to respond to my questions or to other members in the group without waiting to be called on. However, I would appreciate it if only one person talks at a time, and of course there is to be no criticism or judgement of each other.

This group should last approximately one hour. There's a lot we might want to discuss, and time is tight so please excuse me if I need to move us along a bit at times.

Rapport building

We've all been to a sexual health clinic at least once and I don't suppose any of us found it easy the first time. But a lot of things can make using sexual health services easier or more difficult. I know I've had some good and bad experiences in my time and it would be really useful for us to think of how things could be done to increase the good experiences.

Topics

Previous Experiences

Before we start thinking about ways of improving services it would be useful for us to think about our previous experiences of STI testing services, where people have been to get tested and what influenced our decisions to seek testing at a particular place.

1. *Would anyone like to start the ball rolling with telling us about any aspects of STI testing services that felt like a good experience or particularly valuable?*

Prompts and expansions: Cost, venue, accessibility, staff, treatments offered, comfort, surroundings, location? What was it about aspects that were positive? Explore where people have been to get tested.

2. *Any other positive aspects of attending STI testing services?*

Prompts and expansions: Cost, effectiveness of treatment, access/appointments, location, publicity, telephone service, reception, staff, support and information? What was it about aspects that were positive? Why?

3. *What do you think are the worst aspects of using STI testing services?*

Prompts and expansions: Privacy/confidentiality, access, telephone access and making appointments, waiting times, opening times, reception, venue/location ? Explore any that arise in more detail. *What do you think needs to change?*

4. *How have you been referred to/accessed sexual health services?*

Prompts and expansions: First time/subsequently.

- i. Referred by GP, self-referral, pharmacy advice, community services, other route?
- ii. Preferred option? Why?

5. *What problems/difficulties have you faced in using services/getting results/treatments?(Explore each topic in turn)*

Prompts and expansions: Did this happen each time you accessed services? Do you think this was a difficulty with a particular service/venue? Do you think this is a particular issue for this group? (i.e. women, men, gay people, straight people, younger/older people)

6. *Have your experiences of sexual health services - good and bad – had consequences for you or resulted in you doing anything differently?*

Prompts and expansions:

- i. *Tell me more about that. What were the consequences for you?*
- ii. *Have experiences made you more or less likely to access clinical care or other sexual health services?*

Preferences and Suggestions

7. *So far people have mentioned their experiences of (xx) venues (summarise). Can you think of any other ways of accessing testing for sexually transmitted infections apart from these?*

Prompts and expansions: GPs (own GP or other), GUM, hospitals, community testing, pharmacy, university/ occupational health services, over the counter testing kits, home testing kits, internet services, complementary health venues, private healthcare clinics etc?

8. *If you have used any other methods of sexual health service delivery apart from NHS genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics (clap clinics) – what were the good aspects of those methods?*

Prompts and expansions: privacy, speed, waiting times, staff, cost, location, attention, range of services, anonymity etc, ?

9. *What were the negative aspects of those methods?*

Prompts and expansions: privacy (or lack of), speed, waiting times, staff, cost, location, attention, range of services, anonymity etc, ?

10. *How do you think services could be offered differently or improved?*

Prompts and expansions: *What would need to change to make you feel better about using STI testing services, ?*

11. *In an ideal world, what would your ideal STI testing service look like? (Ask them to blue sky think, does not have to be realistic, just any ideas.)*

Prompts and expansions: *How would: samples be taken, appointments be made, results delivered, questions answered, treatments be dispensed, etc? Any other aspects that are important?*

12. *What would make you more likely to use sexual health services?*

13. *What do you feel most needs to change?*

14. *What is the aspect of current services that you feel least needs to be changed?*

Closing remarks

Though there were many different opinions expressed here it would broadly appear to me that ...(summarise the discussion). Does anyone see it differently? Does anyone want to add or clarify this summary?

Is there anything else anyone would like to add?

Thank you very much for coming to this group. Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful.

The ideas and comments you have given us today will remain anonymous.

It's been a really useful group and your comments and suggestions will now be used to help us devise a questionnaire that will be given to people using NHS services for sexual health in the area. It is hoped that this information will provide us with a better understanding of what people want from sexual health services – and how they can be improved.

If you would like to see a copy of the final report when it's completed please leave your address or email and we will send a copy to you.

Thanks very much for your help.
