

3.3 Sexual health

Around one third of Walsall residents are under the age of 25. This age group experiences the highest rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies; young people who live in deprived areas of the borough are the worst affected. Vulnerable groups susceptible to poor sexual health outcomes include teenagers not in employment, education or training (NEETS), Looked after Children (LAC) and children excluded from school.

Chlamydia is the most commonly-diagnosed sexually-transmitted infection. Most people who have it will have no symptoms and will be at higher risk of being infected with other STI's. Chlamydia infection can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease and infertility in women and painful inflammation of the testicles in men. There is an established Chlamydia Screening Programme in Walsall that aims to detect and treat infection in 15-24 year olds. Opportunistic Chlamydia screening provides key opportunities to engage with young people, through a holistic approach to improving knowledge and access to services including education, contraception, STI testing and condom distribution. Through Walsall's established sexual health services there is a multi-faceted approach to promoting good sexual health. This is focused on identifying those most at risk of contracting sexually-transmitted infections and encouraging safe behaviour and testing.

Indicators:

A key indicator of the sexual health of young people in Walsall is the Chlamydia diagnostic rate for the 15-24 year old population. This provides a measure not just of background rates of infection, but also of how young people are engaged in reducing risks associated with unsafe sex. Figure 1 show that young males and females between the ages of 20 and 24 have the highest rates of new STI's diagnosis. Figure 2 shows that the most deprived areas also have the highest Chlamydia rates in Walsall.

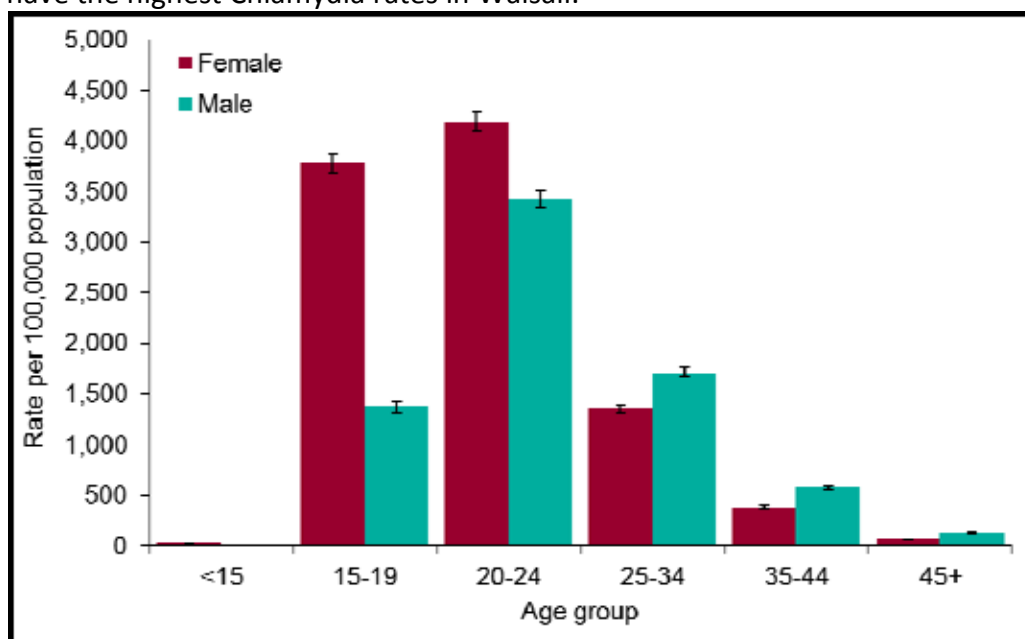


Figure 1 Rate of new STI diagnoses per 100,000 population by age, 2013 (Source: PHE)

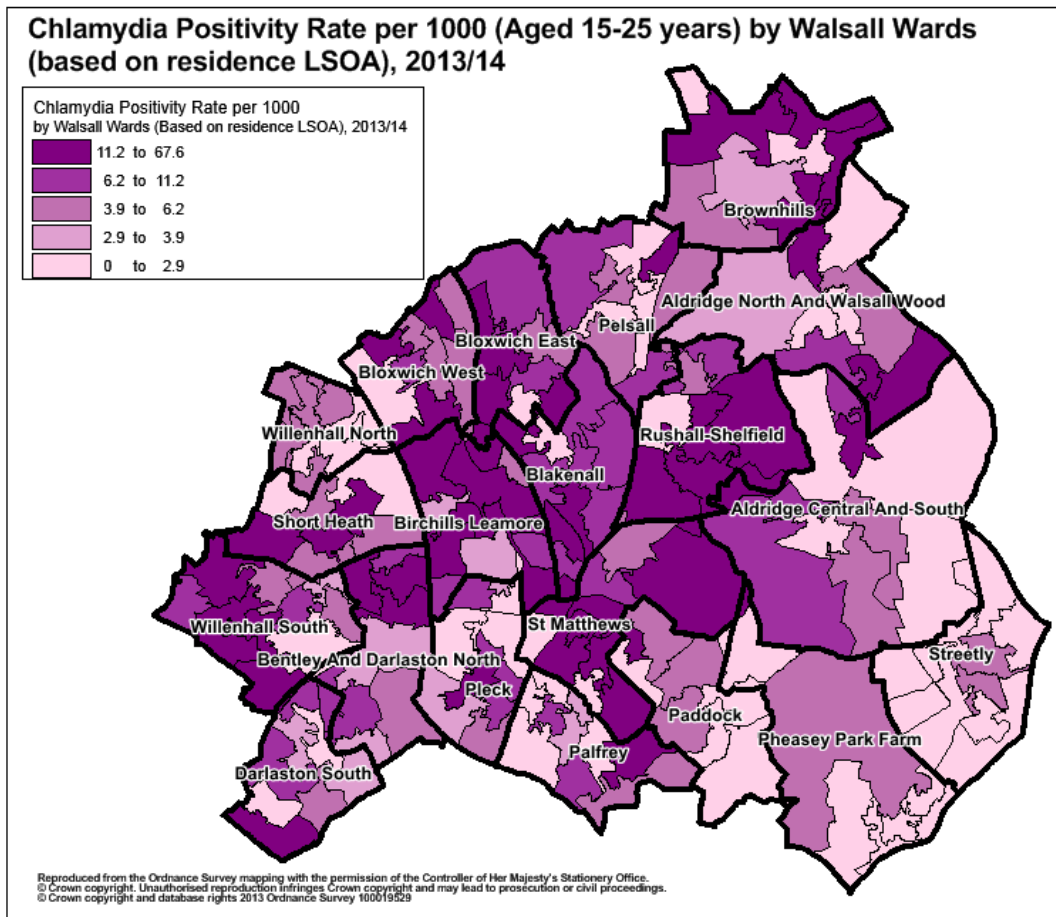


Figure 2 Chlamydia positivity crude rates per 1,000 by Walsall wards 2013/14 (Source: Black Country Chlamydia Screening Programme Database)

Priorities for action:

- *Ensure better collaboration between services which work with young people, including the Walsall Integrated Sexual Health Service, Youth Offending Teams, Looked After Children's Service, Integrated Young Peoples Support Services and schools, to ensure that appropriate high quality services are provided for the most vulnerable young people in Walsall*
- *Improve marketing and communication of sexual health services and messages to young people*
- *Ensure appropriate outreach services are provided in Walsall to ensure gaps in healthcare provision are filled*
- *Ensure 'young-person-friendly' services that encourage and support access into mainstream sexual health services*
- *Redesign and re-launch of the Walsall Condom Distribution Service as part of a holistic young people's sexual health service*
- *Further development of the roles played by GPs, practice nurses and pharmacists*
- *Improve uptake of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC) amongst young people in Walsall*
- *Prioritise early diagnosis of HIV in community settings, particularly for high risk groups*