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University Guide 2022

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SHIFT – Sexual Health in the over ForTy-fives

The Sexual Health in the over ForTy-fives (SHIFT) project is part of the EU Interreg 2Seas Programme, running from 2019 to 2023 and funded by the European Regional Development Fund.



To find out more contact: SHIFTproject@chi.ac.uk

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SHIFT – Sexual Health in the over ForTy-fives

What is SHIFT?

The Sexual Health in the over ForTy-fives (SHIFT) project is part of the EU Interreg 2Seas Programme, running from 2019 to 2023 and funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It is an international, cross-disciplinary project involving partners from UK, the Netherlands and Belgium. Our focus is on empowering people aged over 45 to participate in sexual health services and improve their sexual health and wellbeing, with an additional focus on socio-economically disadvantaged groups across the 2Seas area. Within the SHIFT project, the University of Chichester is evaluation partner and will be assessing the effectiveness of the project outcomes.

Why is Sexual Health in Over-45s Important?

Sexual health is an important, and often overlooked, aspect of health and wellbeing. Studies in Europe highlight the need for people in middle age and beyond (aged 45+) to have better access to sexual health support and care. The over-45s at risk are generally those entering new sexual relationships, often post-menopause (removing the issues of pregnancy without considering the risk of STIs) and who may not have received sexual health education, or have forgotten what they were told.

It has been identified that these older age groups are rarely a focus in European and domestic health policies, yet the correlation is clear between gaps in services and rises in sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates. Additionally, within this group, people with one or more socio-economic disadvantage (such as homeless people, sex workers, non-native speakers and/or migrants) are at even greater risk of being unaware of their sexual health and are unable to access appropriate services.

What will the SHIFT project do?

The SHIFT project will empower people aged over 45 to educate and improve their sexual health by:

1. Insight gathering and testing existing evidence to identify needs, awareness and attitudes towards sexual health in people aged 45+
2. Co-creation of a sexual health & wellbeing model to ensure services are adapted appropriately and engage people aged 45+
3. Co-creation of a sexual health & wellbeing strategy for engaging with people aged 45+ experiencing socio-economic disadvantage
4. Co-creation of a training programme for sexual healthcare professionals and the wider workforce

What have we done so far?

As Evaluation Partner, the University of Chichester has conducted a needs analysis of the over-45s population using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and identified four main areas of concern for the SHIFT project:

- **Knowledge**
 - Identified lack of specific and in-depth knowledge regarding sexual health amongst healthcare professionals
- **Awareness**
 - Identified communication methods which would be most effective in over-45s
 - Identified need for raised awareness of STI risks in over-45s and accessing testing/sexual health services
- **Access**
 - Identified barriers to sexual health services such as where payment is required and limited availability of appointments for sexual health services
- **Stigma**
 - Requirement for stigma-reduction strategies and techniques to increase acceptance of sexual health wellbeing and willingness to access services

SHIFT Project Partnership

The SHIFT Project Partnership includes Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Medway Council, Kent Community Hospitals Trust (KCHFT) and Metro Charity (all UK), SoSAIDS Charity (Netherlands), the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and Odisee University (Belgium).

The University of Chichester SHIFT Team

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