

"I blame irresponsible teenage behaviour"

Before you blame the epidemic of teenage pregnancy on irresponsible teenage behaviour, I challenge the Faculty's members and/or readers of this Journal to consider my recent experience. If this had involved just one clinic or service provider, I would not have been so moved to write in, but it did not.

In the summer of 2011, I went to my general practitioner (GP) in South Wales to have my implant removed and another inserted. The GP failed to get the implant out, and referred me to the local family planning clinic (FPC). I explained that in a few weeks I would be away working, and was reassured that this would not be a problem. The first appointment letter for the FPC arrived on the day of the appointment (I missed the post) and the letter was dated the day before. The second was for a time when I was away.

I was then working in the West Midlands for a few weeks and tried several FPCs and GPs. I was given varied excuses why I could not be seen: "the clinic was fully booked until the following week and if I wanted to be seen I'd have to phone back then", "GPs don't have anything to do with family planning", "we no longer supply that treatment" and "we have a very long waiting list".

I therefore tried again when term restarted and I returned to Bristol. The man who answered the telephone for the FPC was most off-putting, quizzing me on my age, and stating that he could not proceed with the referral without my GP details and finally saying I needed a referral from my GP. I contacted my GP in Bristol who said I should go to the FPC!

If I cannot manage to see anyone by Christmas (2 months away) I will ask my mother to do it. She is a GP and 'does' family planning. But is this really appropriate? It certainly is not an option open to most people.

I feel I have tried quite hard to obtain a service. Is it any wonder that many of my contemporaries give up, and just cross their fingers?

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Competing interests None.

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Editor's note The author of this letter has asked for her name and address to be withheld.