



Title: What constitutes a positive contraceptive experience? A narrative analysis of Scottish contraceptive experiences

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Abstract:

Recent studies suggest that 87% of the female population in the UK aged between 16 and 49 use some form of contraception annually (French et al, 2017). Yet many women suffer from unwanted side effects and reportedly feel uninformed, unprepared and unsupported for the various side effects which can present (Buchanan Institute, 2019). It is unsurprising that the NHS identifies that discontinuation rates of contraception among women in Lothian are currently as high as 33%, annually (NHS Joint Formulary Lothian, 2011). This is significant as many women discontinue their contraception and “change to less effective methods” (ibid). For this reason, issues of contraception are paramount and policies which address these issues must be accelerated in Scotland. It is important to listen to the experiences of people and amplify their voices to reform current frameworks of contraception to make the majority of experiences positive and comfortable.

However, across academic research there is a tendency for an undue focus on negative experiences of contraception. We argue that there is a lack of research and debate on ‘what works’. For this reason this research explored ‘what constitutes a positive contraceptive experience’? We commenced this study by undertaking a systematic review of literature to inform the research methods, methodology and design. This study conducted a narrative analysis on over 90, publicly available, detailed narratives of positive contraceptive experiences. It emerged that there are key indicators that determine the level of positivity during a person's contraceptive experience. Notably: The greater the sense of bodily autonomy along the journey; the greater the appropriateness and convenience of contraceptive method; the lower the time burden ; the more informative, collaborative, non-judgemental and discreet the consultations with Health Care Professionals (HCP) are and finally, the more supportive and open communicative relationships with friends, family and sexual partners the more positive the experience is. This research contributes to the debates on the importance of bodily control; patient and healthcare professional relationship; the influence of family and kinship when choosing contraceptive method(s) and perceptions of convenience in contraception.