

Motivating and supporting people through partner notification for bacterial STIs: Three short films to prompt sex partners to get a full sexual health screen.

A how to guide for sexual health services



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Reviewed by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) and the Society of Sexual Health Advisers
Endorsed by BASHH

For support or feedback: contact your Clinical Lead

Executive summary

We are pleased to share three short films designed to enhance partner notification (PN).

Each film has been thoughtfully developed to motivate and support sex partners to get tested and to reduce the stigma that can often surround sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the process of PN. To help ensure that the messaging resonates effectively with young people, including those of Black Caribbean heritage, two of the three films have been specifically developed with and for these key audiences, who are disproportionately affected by STIs (<u>UKHSA</u>, 2025). It is important to note, however, that the films can be viewed and shared with anyone. The third film is for a general audience.

To help integrate these films into everyday practice, we have created a practical toolkit. This includes suggestions for sharing the films via SMS, showing them in clinic waiting rooms, or using them during community outreach activities.

Who is this toolkit for, and how might it be used?

This resource is especially helpful for those working in sexual health settings, public health/education sector colleagues, and professionals championing best practice in STI care. You might choose to use the films in a focused setting—such as a young person's clinic or service—or gradually introduce them more widely across your service.

Who developed the toolkit and what is it based on?

This work has been shaped by collaboration between a wide range of voices—including healthcare professionals, young people from diverse backgrounds and young people of Black Caribbean heritage, public contributors, the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV, and the Society of Sexual Health Advisers. The toolkit builds on evidence, lived and learned experience, and professional insights.

Why were the films created?

The films were developed to help increase STI and blood-borne virus (BBV) testing (a full sexual health screen) among sex partners, as part of a supportive and effective approach to PN.

Why do we believe the films will help?

Research shows that when people diagnosed with an STI (index patients) and their sex partners are given clear, accessible, and supportive information, PN outcomes improve. These films aim to do just that—through relatable stories, respectful messaging, and inclusive design.

Is there a cost to use the films?

No, the films are completely free to use and share.

Who can use the films?

The films are intended for use by healthcare professionals and patients, including index patients and their sex partners. They may also be used for educational purposes, in line with the copyright statement included in the toolkit.

Healthcare professionals can access the films via the BASHH website: https://www.bashh.org/films_to_enhance_partner_notification.aspx



Please use and share the films in any way which you feel will help motivate and support sex partners to seek an STI test. Here is the link to share with patients:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx6fUisnOn4oh6fuGrnjZAW3n5G7Ury0Z



Who else might benefit from the films?

The films help to dispel myths about STI transmission, reduce the stigma that can often surround STIs and clarify the process of PN and testing options that might be available. Therefore, members of the general public and professionals in the wider health and education sector may also find the films useful.

What should I do right now?

We recommend watching the films and reading through this toolkit, to get a feel for how the films might work in your setting. We have included resources in the Appendices, which your team may find helpful to get started.

What could I do next?

We have outlined four key steps to help you think through how to introduce the films in a way that works for your service and the communities you support. See page 8.

Are there tools to help get the films rolled out?

Yes—we have included practical resources to support you in bringing these films into your routine practice. These include sample wording for SMS texts and ideas for how to raise the films in conversation with your teams or service users (see Appendices).

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Introduction to the films

We have made three short films which we hope will be central to increasing STI testing among the sex partners of people diagnosed with a bacterial STI. We hope these films will be used across sexual health services and will be a useful addition to services you already provide.

Partner notification (PN)¹ is an essential part of STI management and is important for STI control. A key part of PN is testing and treating (as appropriate) exposed sex partners. PN is most effective in preventing and reducing onward STI transmission when it reaches people who are most likely to have an STI and who take part in sexual behaviour that enables STI transmission, including having multiple, concurrent, and/or new sex partners and condomless sex. However, many services struggle to prioritise PN in the face of the sustained rise in some STIs and disinvestment in sexual health services (BASHH, 2024; UKHSA, 2025).

We know from recent research and clinical practice that it can be hard to achieve good PN outcomes, particularly getting sex partners (people notified about an STI exposure) tested. The LUSTRUM programme, a large-scale research initiative funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (reference RP-PG-0614-20009), focussed on PN, and included a randomised controlled trial of accelerated partner therapy (a PN strategy that reduces the time for sex partners to be treated and includes remote or face-to face sex partner assessment by an appropriately qualified healthcare professional). The trial found that only half of the sex partners who received this intervention returned self-sampling kits for testing, potentially leading to unnecessary antibiotic use and an inability to conduct second round" PN (Estcourt et al., 2022). Consequently, the LUSTRUM programme recommended further research into innovative methods to encourage STI and blood-borne virus (BBV) testing among sex partners of people diagnosed with an STI (index patients), aiming to enhance the effectiveness of contact tracing (Estcourt et al., 2024).

To address that need, LUSTRUM2 was funded by the NIHR (reference NIHR205675) to develop three short films to enhance PN. The films aim to motivate and support sex partners to get a full sexual health screen and destigmatise STIs and PN more broadly. The films were created with co-producers, including young people from diverse backgrounds and young people of Black Caribbean heritage, and public contributors. The films are endorsed by the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).

¹ The terms partner notification (PN) and contact tracing are often used interchangeably. In clinical practice we most often use the term 'PN' but not exclusively. Throughout this toolkit, we use both terms depending on the context.

Introduction to the toolkit

This toolkit aims to assist implementation of the films into routine practice and is informed by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) (Damschroeder et al., 2009; Damschroeder et al., 2022), a commonly used and practical framework of factors known to make interventions more likely to succeed in 'the real world'. Drawing on the CFIR will help support services to plan the introduction of the films and implement the films, based on their specific setting.

Who should use this toolkit, when, why, and how?

Professionals working in sexual health settings, public health/education sector colleagues, and those championing best practice in STI care should use this toolkit to guide clinical practice and to ensure the films reach the intended end users—sex partners of people diagnosed with a STI.

The films can be used in everyday practice in digital and face-to-face care pathways, by sharing them directly with service users via SMS, on screens in clinic waiting rooms or during community outreach activities.

You may also choose to post/embed the films on your clinic/NHS Trust website or social media page or include them in local health improvement campaigns.

Who developed this toolkit and what is it based on?

The LUSTRUM2 research team (clinicians, health psychologists, and a behavioural epidemiologist) produced this toolkit with expert input from the specialist organisations, BASHH and the Society of Sexual Health Advisers.

Why have these films been developed?

The films have been created to address the need for interventions to increase sex partner STI and BBV testing in the context of PN for bacterial STIs, as identified in the LUSTRUM trial (Estcourt et al., 2022; Estcourt et al., 2024) and in response to growing evidence that interventions developed with communities are better received and more effective (Woode Owusu et al., 2023).

Why do we think the films will be effective?

Evidence shows that enhancing PN by providing sex partners and index patients with information and resources to educate, inform and support PN, improves PN outcomes (Trelle et al., 2007). As time for PN-related activities is increasingly reduced, these films could provide a useful, appealing adjunct to advice delivered by healthcare professionals or existing support provided via online self-sampling services. The use of patient and public involvement approaches (NIHR, 2024), including extensive and

rigorous co-production (NIHR, 2024), in film development gives confidence that the films are fitting for the target audiences.

Is there a cost to use the films?

No, the films are completely free to use and share.

Who is being asked to/can use the films?

The films can be made available to all service users via clinic waiting rooms and used by healthcare professionals at different and multiple points in both the digital and face-to-face care pathways for index patients and sex partners, as shown on pages 10-12. Their use may be healthcare professional initiated and/or initiated by service users, index patients, and/or sex partners.

Healthcare professionals can access the films via the BASHH website: https://www.bashh.org/films to enhance partner notification.aspx



Please use and share the films in any way which you feel will help motivate and support sex partners to seek an STI test. Here is the link to share with patients:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx6fUisnOn4oh6fuGrnjZAW3n5G7Ury0Z



Are there other uses for the films?

If your clinic supports Relationships and Sex Education/ Healthy Relationships lesson delivery, you may be interested in using the films for educational purposes, outside the clinical setting or care pathways. The films can be used for any health or educational purposes in line with the copyright statement (see Appendices).

Overview of the films

The films aim to motivate and support sex partners to seek a full sexual health screen after learning that someone they have had sex with has a bacterial STI, through challenging STI stigma, normalising STI testing and treatment, and empowering individuals to take control of their sexual health.

The films can be viewed and shared with anyone. However, the messaging has been specifically developed *with* and *for* three key audiences to ensure it resonates effectively with these populations impacted by STIs.

- Michaela, Sam, Saira: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... young people from diverse backgrounds (aged 18–30).
- Malik, Jayden, Chantelle: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... young people of Black Caribbean heritage (aged 18–30).
- Sex Partners: Options for Getting a Sexual Health Check-up people of all ages, with a range of social and demographic backgrounds.

Click here to watch the films:

https://www.bashh.org/films_to_enhance_partner_notification.aspx



Four key steps to rolling out the films into your service

Clinics work in different ways but in most places the steps needed to introduce a new service development are similar. We have included below a number of suggestions with accompanying resources which might be helpful as you use the films in your clinical setting. The most important thing is to do what works for your clinic, your patients, and your staff team.



1. Getting started

It is important to think about how to begin the roll out of using the films. Taking some time to consider launching it will be important in ensuring they get used, and are useful, in the longer-term.

Your clinic may find it helpful to take the following actions:

 Consider allocating a person/role or small team to champion the roll out of the films.

- Use a meeting to explore local plans, ideally this should involve key stakeholders including commissioners, provider communications teams, and delivery partners.
- Update your clinic website to include a link to the films, alongside any local information about seeking a full sexual health screen and/or advice for sex partners/PN/contact tracing.
- Have a meeting, put up posters with the link to/QR code for the films, and/or send an email to share the films with your teams. You could use these introductory statements:
 - Michaela, Sam, Saira: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... follows three young people from diverse backgrounds finding out that someone they have had sex with has an STI, exploring their options for what to do next, and successfully testing.
 - Malik, Jayden, Chantelle: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... follows three young people of Black Caribbean heritage finding out that someone they have had sex with has an STI, exploring their options for what to do next, and successfully testing.
 - Sex Partners: Options for Getting a Sexual Health Check-up —
 explains what to do if someone you have had sex with has an STI.
- Liaise with your SMS and results team to schedule an amendment to diagnosis/ results messages so that the link to the films can be included.

We have offered a checklist to help you get started (see Appendices).

Technical note

- Films are available in MP4 and online streaming formats.
- Subtitled versions provided.
- Suitable for playback on standard clinic screens or tablets.

Safeguarding note

- Always ensure the link to the films can be declined, in the same way that a traditional leaflet could be declined.
- Ensure the films are shared in line with local policy guidance and protocols for safeguarding children and adults.
- Respect service users' privacy when sharing the link to the films digitally.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion note

- All three films should be made available together, so that individuals can access and watch any of the films, depending on their preferences.
- This also helps make sure no-one is inappropriately signposted to a film that they do not relate to without the option of an alternative.

2. Trialling and championing the films

It can be really helpful to connect with trusted local voices who can promote the films and offer support if any practical problems arise. You might consider working with local champions to explore some of the following approaches:

- Meet with interested team members to introduce the films. Trial using the films and then meet again to discuss how they can be rolled out more widely in your setting.
- Work with the interested team members to trial the films for as many days or weeks you feel is appropriate for your setting to cover all relevant staff working across different days of the week.
- After you have met with your team members, update the implementation toolkit to suit your local setting.
- Check whether your team members would be willing to champion the films and confirm whether they need/recommend that any additional support is offered to colleagues build this into the local implementation plan.
- In a staff training/relevant meeting, a clinical leader should try to build an
 understanding of the films, ensuring that they are communicated in a culturally
 sensitive and accessible way, and provide space and time for staff to share their
 views of local implementation. You may find it helpful to:
 - Provide the team with details of the films in line with the materials available.
 - o Offer details about and answer questions about local implementation.
 - Invite the champions to share their views.

3. Going live

Consider a step-by-step approach to using the films used across your service. This will help to identify any practical problems with rolling them out.

Depending on how things are set up locally, you might like to start by using one or two of the films with a smaller group of patients. For example, introducing the films in your

young person's clinics, before rolling out all the films more widely across your service. This gentle, incremental approach can help you spot and address any practical problems early on, making it easier to support wider engagement later.

All service users

- i. On waiting room screens
- ii. Via a QR code in waiting room
 - Poster or flyer (see Appendices).

Index patients

People who are diagnosed with bacterial STIs may interact with clinical services in different ways. The following examples illustrate how the films could be used at various points in index patient care pathways.

- i. During in-person consultations with an index patient, typically when he/she/they attend with symptoms and receive a point of care diagnosis:
 - Advise the index patient to tell their sex partner(s) about their STI diagnosis and encourage them (the sex partner) to attend for / access testing.
 - Send an SMS containing the link to the films to the index patient to share with their sex partner(s) (to enhance patient referral) see Appendices for sample wording for SMS messages.
 - Send an SMS including the link to the films directly to sex partners (to enhance provider referral).
 - Signpost the index patient to the films and encourage access through these suggested actions:
 - "Look on our website".
 - o "Get your partner to look on our website".
 - "Scan this QR code and it will take you to our website where you can watch the films".
- ii. When advising an index patient of a positive STI test result by text, email, telephone, or online, include a link (or offer to send a link, if by telephone) to the films (see Appendices for sample wording).
- iii. During follow-up consultations with an index patient following STI diagnosis either in person or by text/email / telephone (as i and ii above).

Sex partners

People who are contacts of those with bacterial STIs may interact with clinical services in different ways. The examples below show how the films could be used at different points along sex partner care pathways.

i. During one-to-one, in-person consultations when a sex partner seeks STI testing in a clinical setting:

 Offer to send an SMS containing the link to the films (see Appendices for sample wording for SMS messages).

ii.Online, when a sex partner seeks STI self-sampling services:

• The films could be promoted within health education and or resources / more information sections of the self-sampling websites.

iii.Online, when a sex partner seeks information from a clinic website:

• Add a link to the films on any section of the website with sex partner specific content or resources.

Your setting and networks

- Clinics may wish to personalise promotional materials by adding their local logo or contact details, making it easier for people to access support and follow-up care.
- You could create simple posters or flyers (see Appendices for an example) featuring
 a QR code that links directly to the films—ideal for use in clinic spaces or to share
 with your local public health teams. It might also be helpful to involve relevant
 council colleagues who support prevention work.
- The films can also be shared through partnership work with schools, youth organisations, or community groups—whether as part of health education, sex and relationships sessions, or STI stigma awareness training.

4. Learning as you go

As introducing the films involves collaboration across multi-disciplinary teams, it is important that everyone can see the value of their contributions and getting the films to the people who may benefit from them. Sharing small wins, observations, and stories of impact helps keep motivation high and reinforces the purpose behind the work. We also recognise that time is precious in busy clinical settings, so it s helpful to know that the effort being invested in using the films is making a difference.

To support this, clinics may wish to consider the following approaches:

- Create space for informal staff reflections and team debriefs (e.g., during service improvement meetings or multidisciplinary team catch-ups) to share experiences and insights about using the films.
- Monitor impact of the films through small-scale quality improvement projects and/or audits of bacterial STI management, to help understand how the films are being used and whether they are supporting PN goals.

• Use feedback tools, such as short forms or digital surveys, to gather service user views on the films. This could be as simple as a quick question from a healthcare professional (Did you see the film in the waiting room?") or an optional exit poll.

Appendices: Resources

- 1. Film links and introductory statements.
- 2. Key messages included in each film.
- 3. Poster or flyer for waiting room/clinic use.
- 4. Checklist of key actions to help you get started.
- 5. Staff scripts and prompts/conversation starters for different uses:
 - o With all service users.
 - With index patients.
 - o With sex partners.
- 6. Sample wording for SMS.
- 7. Copyright statement.

Appendix 1: Film links and introductory statements

Healthcare professionals can access the films via the BASHH website: https://www.bashh.org/films_to_enhance_partner_notification.aspx



Please use and share the films in any way which you feel will help motivate and support sex partners to seek an STI test. Here is the link to share with patients:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx6fUisnOn4oh6fuGrnjZAW3n5G7Ury0Z



Introductory statements:

- Michaela, Sam, Saira: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... Follows three young people from diverse backgrounds, finding out that someone they have had sex with has an STI, exploring their options for what to do next, and successfully testing.
- Malik, Jayden, Chantelle: Let's Talk Sex Partner Testing... Follows three young people of Black Caribbean heritage finding out that someone they have had sex with has an STI, exploring their options for what to do next, and successfully testing.
- Sex Partners: Options for Getting a Sexual Health Check-up Explains what to do if someone you have had sex with has an STI.

Appendix 2: Key messages included in each film

Messages included in all 3 films for clinical and behavioural science reasons

Explain that many STIs and HIV have no symptoms (i.e., 'you wouldn't feel anything or know you had it') and can be passed unknowingly to a sex partner(s) during vaginal, anal, and oral sex, especially if not using protection such as a condom, so the only way to know for sure whether you have the infection/other STIs and HIV is to test.

Explain that it is quite common to have more than one infection and that the notified
STI(s) signals risk of acquiring other STIs and HIV so it is a good idea to do wider checks and get a full sexual health screen, including testing for the notified STI and other common STIs and HIV (e.g., do a full MOT, don't just check the brakes).

Tell people about the negative personal long-term health consequences of untreated

3 STIs and HIV (e.g., chronic pelvic pain, pregnancy complications, infertility) then stress the personal relevance and health benefits of getting tested promptly by focussing on mitigation of the possible negative health impacts (e.g., it's really important to test, as if you do have an STI or HIV then you can get treatment/medication and help prevent future major illness - this is especially important for syphilis and HIV).

Emphasise that there are various free, local/widely available, and confidential options for accessing STI and HIV testing and treatment (e.g., face-to-face, at a sexual health clinic, some GP practices, pharmacies, contraception clinics, and young people's services, or online - order a self-sampling kit to be delivered by post) and signpost where to find out more about these services and the wide range of support available (e.g., resources to enable the correct use of self-sampling kits).

Highlight the different benefits of different testing options (e.g., face-to-face - some people prefer to see a healthcare professional, online - discreet and private, quick and convenient, tests can be delivered to/done in your own home or another preferred location if you have concerns about people in your household opening your mail or otherwise finding out you have ordered a self-sampling kit online).

Tell or show that many people find getting practical and/or emotional support for doing the range of tests useful.

Additional messages included in the film for young people

These 6 additional messages were prioritised by the co-production group.

- Offer reassurance and support for individuals feeling anxious or fearful about

 testing by describing the process of STI and HIV testing (i.e., outline what to expect how samples are taken for different STIs, where samples are taken from, how those
 samples are tested for STIs, how and when results are shared).
- Show and/or promote open conversations about sex and STIs (e.g., by showing a discussion about an STI exposure and getting a full sexual health screen between peers).
- Acknowledge and challenge stigma, shame and taboos around sex, STIs, HIV and testing (e.g., state that anyone can get an STI or HIV (even in a committed relationship, it's not about being 'pure' or 'dirty') because STIs and HIV can be passed unknowingly during vaginal, anal, and oral sex, especially if not using protection such as a condom).
- 10 Show or describe that STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and syphilis are common.
- Raise awareness of the serious and long-term consequences of STIs and HIV for others (e.g., chronic pelvic pain, infertility, pregnancy complications) to highlight that testing is good for your current/future partner(s).
- 12 Suggest that individuals prioritise taking care of their own health by getting a sexual health screen, before addressing any other issues related to the STI exposure.

Additional messages included in the film for young people of Black Caribbean heritage

These 6 additional messages were prioritised by the co-production group.

- Acknowledge and challenge stigma, shame and taboos around sex, STIs, HIV and testing (e.g., state that anyone can get an STI or HIV (even in a committed relationship, it's not about being 'pure/clean' or 'dirty') because STIs and HIV can be passed unknowingly during vaginal, anal, and oral sex, especially if not using protection such as a condom).
- Offer reassurance and support for individuals feeling anxious or fearful about testing by describing the process of STI and HIV testing (i.e., outline what to expect how samples are taken for different STIs, where samples are taken from, how those samples are tested for STIs, how and when results are shared).
- Offer reassurance and support for individuals feeling anxious or fearful about potential positive test results by focusing on how good they will feel for themselves once they are tested, whatever their results, and outlining what will happen if they do test positive (e.g. better to be in the know, they can get treatment and be sexually healthy for the future).
- Tell or show that many people find getting practical and/or emotional support for deciding on what to do after being notified of an STI exposure helpful (e.g. show that asking for and/or accepting emotional support from community, family members, friends, a partner(s), and/or healthcare professionals can help to manage strong emotions related to finding out about an STI exposure and support them to prioritise taking care of their own health by getting a sexual health screen, before addressing any other issues related to the STI exposure).
- **Show and/or promote open conversations about sex and STIs** (e.g., by showing a discussion about an STI exposure and getting a full sexual health screen between peers in a sensitive way which does not include blaming or shaming anyone).
- 12 Inform that prompt testing and treatment can prevent infections being passed 'back and forth' in ongoing sexual relationships (i.e., protect yourself / your current partner(s) from getting the infection again)

Appendix 3: Poster or flyer for waiting room/clinic use

Download the separate PDF file of the poster/flyer and add your local NHS Trust logo.

Someone I've had sex with has an STI - what now?

















Watch these three short films to learn why testing is important and explore your options for getting a sexual health check-up



Scan the QR code to watch and share the films OR

Ask about the films during your appointment

add local logo here

Appendix 4: Checklist of key actions to help you get started

- Watch all three films to understand the content and intended audiences.
- Identify a clinic champion or small team to lead the launch and rollout of the films in your setting.
- Hold a multi-disciplinary team meeting to discuss and agree local implementation plans and approach to monitoring impact.
- Send a team-wide email to advise when films will be launched in your setting.
- Update the clinic website with film links and local partner notification (PN) information.
- Display poster and set up film screening in waiting rooms.
- Coordinate with the SMS team to include film links in results messages.
- Launch films in your setting.

Appendix 5: Staff scripts and prompts/conversation starters for different uses

With all service users

"We've introduced a few short films into our service that you might find helpful. They're all just a few minutes long, and they're designed to support people who've found out a sex partner has an STI and aren't sure what to do next.

One film explains the different ways to get a sexual health check-up, and the other two films follow the stories of young people figuring out what kind of STI testing works best for them.

Would you be happy for me to text you the link? It's helpful to have in case you're ever in that situation or even to pass on to someone else."

With index patients

"It's important to let your sex partner(s) know you've been diagnosed with [STI], so they can get checked too. They might not be sure what to do next.

We have a link to 3 short films—quick to watch, easy to understand, and really reassuring. One film explains how to get a sexual health check-up, and the other two films follow young people working out which testing option is right for them.

Would you be happy for me to text you the link so you can share it with your partner—or partner(s)?"

With sex partners

"It's important to have a sexual health check-up if someone you've had sex with has been diagnosed with an STI. I can send you a link with 3 short films—they're just a few minutes long, really clear, and reassuring. One film explains different ways to get a check-up and the other two films follow young people finding out a partner has an STI and deciding what works best for them.

Would you be happy for me to text you the link?"

Appendix 6: Sample wording for SMS

For index patients:

It's important to let your partner(s) know you've been diagnosed with an STI—they may not know what to do next.

You can share this link with them:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx6fUisnOn4oh6fuGrnjZAW3n5G7Ury0Z

It leads to 3 short films—they're quick to watch, easy to understand and reassuring: One film describes the different ways to get a sexual health check-up.

Two films follow the stories of young people finding out their partner has an STI, exploring different ways to get a sexual health check-up and figuring out which STI testing options works best for them.

For sex partners:

Just found out your partner has an STI and not sure what to do?

This link can help:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx6fUisnOn4oh6fuGrnjZAW3n5G7Ury0Z

It leads to 3 short films—they're quick to watch, easy to understand and reassuring: One film describes the different ways to get a sexual health check-up.

Two films follow the stories of young people finding out their partner has an STI, exploring different ways to get a sexual health check-up and figuring out which STI testing options works best for them.

Appendix 7: Copyright statement

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