

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4569

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People

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Subject:

Online Sexual Health Services 2022/23

Total Value:

£621,189 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1) To approve spend of up to £150,000.00 from the Public Health Grant 2021/22 to cover the cost of activity under online sexual health services (covering HIV & Syphilis Home Sampling and Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea Screening and oral contraception) for the current financial year 2021/22..
 - 2) To approve payments for online Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea Screening to the current provider SH24 under the contract procured from the G Cloud Framework.
 - 3) To approve payments for HIV & Syphilis Home Sampling to the current provider SH24 procured from the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework via the UK Health Security Agency.
 - 4) To approve spend of up to £471,189 from the Public Health Grant (2022/23) to meet the cost of Online STI Screening services for the financial year 2022/23.
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- 2) To approve procurement of the contract to a service provider from the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) HIV Self Self Sampling Framework (a nationally approved framework for public sector organisations)
 - 3) To approve procurement for a Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea Screening contract from the UKHSA eSHR Framework.
 - 4) To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to sign the final contract in respect of the service.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

Under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act (2012) Nottingham City Council (NCC) has a statutory responsibility to provide, or secure the provision of, open access sexual health services in its area. Nottingham City Council has provided online sexual health services for over 5 years.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, government restrictions initially did not impact directly on the demand for online Sexual Health services. However, as restrictions were eased, the ongoing pressures in face to face clinical services and challenges in service user access manifested in a surge in demand and activity for online services across the country. While some LAs decided to place a limit on numbers of online orders for STI tests and contraception, Nottingham City Council Public Health felt that this would lead to further inequity in access to services as well as increases to existing high STI rates and increases in unplanned pregnancy and abortions. There are now indications that the preference to access online and virtual sexual health services has become a sustained behaviour change and informed choice amongst service users. A further Delegated Decision (4436) was approved to cover the in-year over spend of £240,563. this would increase the 2021/22 budget to £300,000.00 to fund projections modelled on increasing demand. In July 2021, symptomatic testing and Chlamydia treatment were removed from the online offer as face to face services moved towards restoration and recovery planning. In January 2022, the Emergency Hormonal Contraception offer was also removed. However, there has been a continued increase in demand for online STI testing. Further in-year forecasting predicts that the total budget required for the current year will reach a total of £450,000, £150,000 more than the £300,000 covered by the two previous approvals. This cost will be covered from one-off COVID-19 related underspend from the Sexual Health budget and wider Public Health grant.

Estimates based on current activity levels and the best financial offer from a selection of providers from the UKHSA eSHR Framework and ESPO Framework are indicating that the budget required for these services in 2022/23 would be £471.189.

Work is underway to develop and pilot a more integrated model locally, it has not been possible to establish this to commence as soon as the current contract ends on 31st March 2022. To ensure continuity of provision, new contracts will need to be awarded for 6 months with option to extend for a further 6 months if required.

Other Options Considered:

1 - No online sexual health service. This would be detrimental to citizens who have overcome barriers in accessing STI testing services which act as a springboard into face to face clinics for those with complex needs. Online services in Nottingham are used by a representative proportion of BAME citizens and young people at high risk of poor sexual health outcomes.

2 - To restrict online STI testing to those aged under 25 years as the highest risk age group. Local service data shows, those using online services aged over 24 years included significant proportions of BAME services users and males who may be MSM high risk service users.

3- To identify common factors of those not returning kits and consider restrictions for certain groups. Many of those not returning kits included those aged under 25 years and a significant proportion of high risk BAME groups.

Restricting access based on the above options would risk causing barriers for high risk groups such as young people, some BAME groups, MSM.

4 - Restricting access by reducing the number of orders, or by age would lead to inequity in access and further inequalities in sexual health outcomes.

5 - A more integrated online service led by the Integrated Sexual Health Services provider. This is in progress but will not be established in time (if at all) to commence when the current online service ends.

Background Papers:

Published Works:

Delegated Decision 4436 - Online Sexual Health Services Expenditure

Affected Wards:

Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

Consultations:

Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications:

None identified

Equality:

EIA not required. Reasons: EIA not required as this is not a new or a reduced service. There is no workforce, service/community/policy impact.

Social Value Considerations: None identified

Regard for NHS Constitution: Local authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to the NHS Constitution when exercising their public health functions under the NHS Act 2006. In making this decision relating to public health functions, we have properly considered the NHS Constitution where applicable and have taken into account how it can be applied in order to commission services to improve the health of the local community.

Decision Type: Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In: Yes

Call In Expiry date: 29/03/2022

Advice Sought: Legal, Finance, Procurement

Legal Advice:

The proposals in this report raise no legal issues and are supported.

It is understood that the services are to be procured using frameworks and so will offer a compliant route delivering best value to the Council for delivery of its statutory obligations with respect to these services.

The mechanism for call offs from the Framework will need to be followed and appropriate terms and conditions put in place. Advice provided by Dionne Claire Screamon (Solicitor) on 15/03/2022.

Finance Advice:

As outlined in the brief the purpose of this decision is to approve expenditure of up to £621,189 on online sexual health services, split over two years, with expenditure of an additional £150,000 during financial year 2021/22, and a further £471,189 during financial year 2022/23.

Expenditure on sexual health, including the £150,000 in 2021/22 and the £471,189 in 2022/23 has been included within current plans for use of Public Health grant for 2021/22 and 2022/23 respectively. As such, funding for this additional focus of funds on online sexual health services is secure.

Advice provided by Graeme Black (Commercial Business Partner) on 16/03/2022.

Procurement Advice:

The Decision to approve further spend of £150,000 from the Public Health Grant to cover the cost of online sexual health services for the current year 2021/22, is supported by procurement. The contract for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening is procured under the G Cloud Framework and the HIV & Syphilis home sampling is procured from an ESPO Framework via the UK Health Security Agency.

The Decision to approve spend of up to £471,189 from the Public Health Grant to meet the costs of Online STI screening services for the financial year 2022/23 is supported by procurement. The HIV Self Sampling service will be procured from the ESPO HIV Self Sampling Framework and the Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea Screening contract will be procured from the UKHSA eSHR Framework. Advice provided by Nicola Harrison (Procurement Lead Officer) on 10/03/2022.

Signatures

Adele Williams (Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health)
SIGNED and Dated: 22/03/2022
Lucy Hubber (DPH)
SIGNED and Dated: 21/03/2022