

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Reference Number:

4814

Author:

Rosalyne Frances Howie

Department:

People

Contact:

Nancy Cordy

(Job Title: Commissioning Manager, Email: nancy.cordy@nottinghamcity.gov.uk, Phone: 0115 876 4105)

Subject:

Online Sexual Health Testing Services 23/24

Total Value:

£571,189 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

1. To allocate budget and approve spend of £471,189 from the Public Health Grant (2023/24) to meet the cost of Online Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Screening Services (Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea) for the financial year 2023/24. 2. To allocate budget and approve spend of £60 000 from the Public Health Grant (2023/24) to meet the cost of HIV and Syphilis Home Sampling for the financial year 2023/24. 3. To allocate budget and approve spend of up to £40 000 from the Public Health Grant, noting that in the first instance we will be looking to spend £8,000 from 2022/23 and £8 000 from 2023/24 or £16 000 in total to meet the cost of chlamydia treatment for low-risk clients for Quarter 4 2022/23 and Quarter 1 2023/24 as a pilot. 4. To approve the procurement of services from the available frameworks for HIV & Syphilis Home Sampling and Online STI Screening services (Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea) for the dates 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. 6. To delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to award the contracts. 7. To delegate authority to the Director of Commissioning and Contracting to sign the contracts.

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 local authorities decided to place a limit on numbers of online orders for sexually transmitted infection (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 accessing online and virtual sexual health services has become a sustained behaviour change and an informed choice amongst service users. A further Delegated Decision (4569) was approved to cover the in-year over spend of £621,189 to fund 2021/22 uplift and 2022/23 activity. 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 the Online STI Screening services (Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea) and HIV & Syphilis Home Sampling for 2023/24 will be £571,189. In addition, we would like to pilot chlamydia treatment for low-risk individuals which would reduce the number of client hand-offs to different services and is preferred from a clinical governance perspective. It is proposed in the first instance to pilot this in Quarter 4 2022/23 and Quarter 1 2023/24 with a view to extending full year effect if successful. Work is underway to recommission sexual health services by March 2024 which may lead to developing a more integrated model locally, but it has not been possible to establish this as a pilot and therefore as the current contract ends on 31st March 2023, we would like to ensure continuity of provision. New contracts will need to be awarded for 1 year.

Other Options Considered:

1 - No online sexual health service. This would be detrimental to citizens who have overcome barriers in accessing sexually transmitted infection (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. Therefore this option was rejected. 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 and therefore have been rejected. 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 and therefore this option has been rejected. 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:

None

Published Works:

Delegated Decision 4569

Affected Wards:	Citywide
Colleague / Councillor Interests:	None
Consultations:	Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.
Crime and Disorder Implications:	Not Applicable
Equality:	EIA not required. Reasons: Continuation of current service and therefore no change in service offer. The service provides a greater reach for residents.
Social Value Considerations:	Continuation of current service and therefore no change in service offer. The service provides a greater reach for residents. The model is being reviewed for 2024.
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:	17/01/2023
Advice Sought:	Legal, Finance, Procurement
Legal Advice:	Decision 1 - 3 inclusive relate to the extension of existing framework agreements. Assuming that the framework agreements have provisions allowing for extensions, this causes no significant legal concerns. Both in respect of these and the rest of the decisions, the Council needs to ensure compliance with the Council's Constitution and the relevant legal requirements, including the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Legal Services will support, as required, the procurement of services between 1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024. Anthony Heath, Senior Solicitor, 14th November 2022. Advice provided by Anthony Heath (Senior Solicitor) on 14/11/2022.

Finance Advice:

For reasons outlined by the report author, this decision seeks approval to:

- 1. allocate budget and approve spend £471,189 from the Public Health grant to Online STI Screening Services for 2023/24.**
- 2. allocate budget and approve spend £60,000 from the Public Health grant to HIV & Syphilis Home Sampling for 2023/24.**
- 3. allocate budget and approve spend £40,000 from the Public Health grant to Chlamydia Treatment for 2022/23 & 23/24.**

The total cost of this decision is £571,189 and will be fully funded from the Public Health grant. If the Public Health grant was to reduce in future years, the service would need to realign services within the revised available funding limit ensuring that no financial pressure arises. This decision has no impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Once the decision is approved, a budget virement will be posted to realign the budgets, supporting budget managers to robustly monitor the budget.

The actual costs associated with this decision will require regular monitoring to form an audit trail against this grant funding and support robust forecasting. Any decisions taken will need to be robustly captured against this decision value to ensure it is not exceeded. This information will also be used for internal/external reporting purposes as required.

Advice provided by Tracey Moore (Senior Finance Technician) on 04/01/2023. Advice provided by Tracey Moore (Senior Finance Technician) on 04/01/2023.

Procurement Advice:

This decision to approve procurement of Online Sexual Health Testing Services for 2023/24 is supported by the Procurement Team who will support the framework call-off process as required. Advice provided by Nicola Harrison (Procurement Lead Officer) on 14/11/2022.

Signatures

Linda Woodings as Portfolio Holder (PH Adult Social Care and Health)
SIGNED and Dated: 05/01/2023
Lucy Hubber (DPH)
SIGNED and Dated: 05/01/2023