

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

2198

Author:

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Department:

Children and Families

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Subject:

Website-based Chlamydia screening costs

Total Value:

£50,000 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1) To approve an increase in Nottingham City Council's funding contribution to the Freetest.me Online Chlamydia screening service from £33,750 to £83,750, for the contract year 2015/16. This change is due to increased uptake of the service, and is required for 1 year only.
- 2) To grant a dispensation from Contract Procedure Rule 5.1.1 in order to increase the value of the contract as above, without re-tendering for the service.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

Freetest.me is a postal Chlamydia screening service, providing self-testing kits ordered online via the Freetest.me website. This service is provided by Preventx, and is free to use for all Nottingham City residents aged 16-24 years old. Citizens enter their details onto the website and are sent the appropriate test kit. Each kit is discreetly packaged and contains instructions, a specimen collection receptacle and pre-paid return postage and packaging. Completed tests are returned directly to the laboratory at Nottingham University Hospitals (NUH). Results are given via the citizen's chosen method (text, email, phone call). Those with positive results are asked to contact the GUM services for treatment.

The service provides an alternative way to access Chlamydia screening, rather than through GUM services. GUM services are tariff-based, more expensive, and it is a statutory requirement to provide open access to all. Therefore the only way to mitigate the costs of the GUM services is by providing more cost effective prevention and treatment options.

- The cost of Chlamydia screening through the Freetest.me website is approximately £22.50 per screen.**
- The cost of Chlamydia screening through GUM services is £139.47 per screen.**

Freetest.me was initially funded by Nottingham City PCT, and transferred to the City Council during the Public Health transition in April 2013. The approved annual contract value is currently £33,750 - Nottingham City Council pay per test up to this value. Therefore the annual contract value pays for 1,500 tests.

The contract commenced in April 2012, and at this time the annual contract value was adequate to pay for the number of tests which were taking place. In line with all Nottingham City's sexual health services, usage of the service has increased each year since then. In 2014/15, 2,373 tests took place - this was funded by under-spend from previous years and a small increase in funding in-year. In 2015/16 the number of tests taking place is expected to increase further and the approved annual contract value of £33,750 is inadequate to fund the service. Approximately £20,000 worth of tests have taken place by late July 2015. The additional £50,000 of funding requested will ensure that sufficient funding is available for the remainder of 2015/16. Any funding not spent on tests will remain in the sexual health budget to be utilised for other services such as GUM.

The current contract value was agreed via email by the then Director of Public Health, Dr. Chris Kenny, and Councillor Alex Norris, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health, in February 2014, as an extension of the contractual arrangements made at the Executive Board Commissioning Sub-Committee in October 2013. This agreement included the option to continue this service until 31st March 2016, without re-tendering for the service. The change in funding detailed above is required to ensure delivery of the service until 31st March 2016. Any continuation of website-based Chlamydia screening services beyond March 2016 will be undertaken through a procurement which will comply with the City Council's Contract Procedure Rules and will be undertaken during 2015/16. This will be the subject of a future report.

Other Options Considered:

1. Continue to fund Freetest.me at its current value, for the remainder of 2015/16. Due to the current demand for the service, the current contract value is unlikely to pay for tests beyond September 2015. This would mean that the service would cease to operate in Nottingham City. This could lead to some citizens accessing the more expensive screening and treatment services such as GUM, increasing overall costs for provision of sexual health services. Other implications include some citizens failing to access sexual health services leading to an increase in sexually transmitted infections, confusion regarding service availability and lack of continuity of services should the local authority procure a new service to commence from 1st April 2016.
2. Decommission the current service, re-model and procure as a new service through open tender process. Re-procurement is currently planned to take place during 2015/16, for the new service to commence from 1st April 2016. Savings may be made through the competitive tender process however, it is unlikely that a new service could be in place before April 2016. Therefore an increase in the 2015/16 contract value will be required to provide continuity of service until 1st April 2016.
3. Decommission the service. The service would cease to operate in Nottingham City resulting in increased GUM costs and risks to citizens (as discussed in option 1).

Background Papers: None

Published Works: None

Affected Wards: Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests: None

Dispensation from Financial Regulations: Yes

Consultations: Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications: N/A

Equality: EIA not required. Reasons: This is a continuation of existing activities, so there will be no adverse impact on citizens.

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:

15/10/2015

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement

Legal Advice:

There are no significant legal issues arising from this report. The current contract has been extended in accordance with Executive Board Commissioning Sub-Committee's previous authority and this report is now seeking the right to increase the contract value for the reasons set out.

The value of the contract in total remains below the EU threshold for these types of services and therefore the Council may grant a dispensation from its own procurement requirements for operational reasons. As the need for the increase in contract value is due to an unforeseen higher demand on the service and there is a clear intention to procure any future services, the decision is, on this occasion, supported by Legal Services.

Advice provided by Naomi Vass (Senior Solicitor) on 09/09/2015.

Finance Advice:

There is a provision within the Public Health budget for a consultant post, this is currently vacant. This provision will be used to fund this one off uplift for the Website based Chlamydia Screening of £0.050m

The Public Health Budget is fully funded from Public Health grant, that is ring fenced for Public Health services. There will be no cost to the MTFP

Advice provided by Claire Gavagan (Finance Business Partner (Communities)) on 14/09/2015.

Procurement Advice:

There are no significant procurement concerns with this decision.

The Procurement Team is supporting a competitive tender process for a new chlamydia screening service contract to run from 2015/16, in compliance with Contract Procedures Rules. This will ensure transparency and value for money going forwards.

The dispensation from CPR5.1.1 to increase the contract value for this year without a competitive process is supported for operational reasons. This will ensure consistency of service and enable current levels of demand to be met via the current contract whilst the full service is re-tendered.

Advice provided by Dawn Cafferty (Procurement Category Manager) on 18/08/2015.

Signatures

Alex Norris (PH for Adults, Health and Community Sector)
SIGNED and Dated: 08/10/2015
Alison Challenger (Director of Public Health (Interim))
SIGNED and Dated: 07/10/2015
Theresa Channell (Head of Corporate and Strategic Finance) - Dispensation from Financial Regulations
SIGNED and Dated: 05/10/2015
Chief Financial Officer's Comments: