



Mayor and Cabinet

Permission to extend the delivery of online sexual and reproductive health services (e-service)

Date: 8th March 2023

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Borough-wide

Contributors: Director of Public Health, Director of Integrated Commissioning

Outline and recommendations

The City of London currently holds a contract with Preventx for online sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, offering a range of services for contraception, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV testing and diagnosis. The Council buys into this contract through an Inter Authority Agreement.

This report recommends that Mayor & Cabinet agree to extend the delivery of the online E-Service SRH services for 2 years commencing on 1st April 2023 at the maximum value of £1m per annum.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

COVID related contract extensions Part 1 – 24th March 2021

Request for Re-Procurement of Sexual Health Services Award Report – 9th February 2017

Request for Re-procurement of Sexual Health Services – 23rd November 2016

1. Summary

- 1.1 The City of London (CoL) currently holds a contract with Preventx online sexual and reproductive health services (SRH) services that offer a range of SRH services for contraception, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV testing and diagnosis. Lewisham Council buys into this contract through an Inter Authority Agreement.
- 1.2 The E-Service is delivered in partnership with Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust and Lloyds Pharmacy but the contract was awarded by CoL to Preventx Ltd.
- 1.3 Permitting the extension of the contract with the CoL will enable the continued service delivery to meet the needs of Lewisham's residents and supports the wider SRH services delivered in Lewisham by statutory and voluntary/community services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Mayor & Cabinet agree to extend the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) with the City of London to access online sexual health 'e-service' provided by Sexual Health London for 2 years commencing 1st April 2023 with the contract value of £1m per annum, and £2m for the total contract value for the 2 years of the contract.

3. Policy context

- 3.1 Local authorities have a statutory obligation to ensure provision of SRH services for their residents. Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013 require local authorities to provide certain Public Health services, including open access sexual health services.
- 3.2 Lewisham continues to experience high demand and need for sexual health services reflected in these higher than average rates of STIs and HIV. Teenage pregnancy rates, and those leading to abortion are also higher locally than for England.
- 3.3 Sexual Health is an important Public Health priority at both a national and local level and as such Lewisham's Health and Wellbeing Board identified sexual health as one of its 9 priorities for Lewisham.
- 3.4 The recommendations within this report relate to the following priorities in the Council's new Corporate Strategy 2022-2026, namely:
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - Children & Young People
 - Open Lewisham
- 3.5 In addition, the recommendations within this report also align to Lewisham Labour 2022 manifesto commitment to 'Increase the availability of anonymous online sexual health services'.
- 3.6 Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham (LSL) have had joint commissioning arrangements for SRH services since April 2016. A specialist commissioning team, based at Lambeth Council, carries out a range of commissioning functions on behalf of the three LSL boroughs, including overseeing a shared Action Plan, delivering

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strategic needs assessments and other cross-cutting projects to improve sexual and reproductive health across LSL.

- 3.7 LSL together face some of the greatest sexual health challenges in England, with similarly young, mobile and diverse populations.
- 3.8 Rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the three LSL boroughs are the highest in England. There are persistent inequalities in sexual and reproductive health, with young people, men who have sex with men (MSM) and black and minority communities experiencing the greatest burden.
- 3.9 In response to these challenges, LSL agreed a shared Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy for 2019-2024. The strategy has a focus on reducing inequalities in sexual and reproductive health as one of its underlying principles, stating that:
- “While we will continue to commission welcoming, accessible and non-discriminatory services, to reduce inequalities in sexual and reproductive health we also need to commission services aligned with the concept of proportionate universalism. This means that whilst we will maintain open access SRH services for all, we also need to tailor services to those with greater need in order to reduce the impact of poor sexual health in our communities.”.*
- 3.10 Progress to date includes the development of an enhanced Pharmacy Contraception Service, an online contraception service offer and the introduction of the SXT Partner Notification tool across the three Trusts in LSL. Joint strategic needs assessments have been completed for Contraception, for HIV prevention and the experience of living with HIV in LSL, and for Syphilis and Gonorrhoea.
- 3.11 Each LSL borough has a local strategy action plan to bring together local stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve sexual health outcomes for our residents. Officers have worked with representatives from across the system of SRH service providers in Lewisham (SRH clinics, primary care, E-service, young people’s services, abortion services, education, Council and voluntary sector organisations), to develop the Action Plan (attached). In Lewisham, this has provided opportunity for us to gain greater understanding of local service developments since the LSL strategy was launched, to assess service changes due to Covid-19, and to identify future projects and activities to improve SRH locally.

4. Background

- 4.1 In 2015/2016, the growing need and demand for SRH clinical services placed increasing pressures on local authority Public Health budgets, with individual boroughs finding it increasingly difficult to meet the rising costs of provision.
- 4.2 The London Sexual Health Transformation Programme (LSHTP), a partnership of the majority of London Councils, was formed to help manage the increasing demand for, and use of, specialist SRH clinic services and to develop more efficient and cost effective SRH pathways and services. The programme aimed to transform SRH service delivery and control costs across the system by three main means:
- Introducing the London e-service – www.SHL.UK – as an alternative, and cheaper, delivery platform for basic STI testing and screening, alongside a reduction in the overall number of open access clinic sites,
 - A requirement for clinics to divert (“channel shift”) those with less complex sexual health needs to online services, to pharmacies or to GPs, as appropriate, to ensure specialist clinics can maintain capacity for responding to patients with more complex needs.

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- Introduction of the integrated sexual health tariff (ISHT) which applies robustly costed tariff prices for a range of clinical SRH interventions and pathways, The ISHT replaced the previous single tariff approach used for genitourinary medicine services and fixed block payment arrangements for contraception and reproductive health services and now enables all elements of the service to be cross charged between boroughs.
- 4.3 This transformative agenda formed the basis of the current contracts which commenced in April 2018.
- 4.4 The City of London is the Lead Authority for the pan London Sexual Health e-healthcare service contract. The CoL manages the contract with a formal partnership agreement with twenty-seven London boroughs (See Appendix A).
- 4.5 The London Borough of Camden led on the procurement on behalf of all London Councils who wanted to buy into the service. The City of London entered into and manage the contract on behalf of the London Boroughs. The procurement followed the Competitive Dialogue process and concluded on the 24th April 2017. The evaluation panel initially recommended awarding the contract to Preventx Ltd. for an initial period of 5 years with the option to extend for a period of 3 years. The first 5years expired on 15th August 2022 and has subsequently been extended once until 2025.Lewisham initially signed up for 5 years
- 4.6 Lewisham residents have had access to STI Testing and some treatments via the pan-London E-service since July 2018. Approval to join this agreement was originally granted for a period of 2 years since 2018 at an estimated cost of £426,150 and was granted authorised extensions and is detailed in 4.10 and 4.11
- 4.7 It was vital to understand the impact of these changes on current and future service use and the LSL Sexual Health Programme of Change was convened to support effective commissioning plans for future services within this changing context.
- 4.8 A key priority included the development of an active public and service user/patient engagement programme to inform service development and contract renegotiations. This workstream focused on improving access routes and handovers between services, optimising referral pathways and the interfaces between services.
- 4.9 Mayor and Cabinet previously agreed to extend Lewisham access to the pan-London E-service from July 2020 until March 2022 to enable a longer-term review of how this service complements the wider sexual health system which has changed and will continue to change as a result of coronavirus.
- 4.10 In March 2021, Mayor and Cabinet authorised officers to extend the current contract from April 2022 to March 2023, to allow time for the services to recover following restrictions during the COVID pandemic and for commissioners to undertake a review of changes within the current contract period, including COVID related impacts.
- 4.11 As part of Covid-19 business continuity measures access to the e-service was uncapped in March 2020, and online contraception has been enabled for a 6 month period from February 2021.
- 4.12 This decision to extend access to the E-Service will ensure continuity of access to a wide range of interventions online, providing choice to people about how they access services, and to manage demand in clinics to ensure there is capacity to meet more complex clinical needs.
- 4.13 Payment is on activity and total costs of services accessed via the e-service are forecast to be approximately £1,000,000 per annum for 2022/23.

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5. Service model

- 5.1 The E-Service meets the needs and SRH requirements of approximately one quarter of the patient population that aged 19 and under. The online offer increases access to SRH services to support young people with all protected characteristics.
- 5.2 The service provides high quality advice and information in respect of sexual health services and online access to order self-sampling/self-testing kits for STIs and HIV for people that do not have symptoms or are 'asymptomatic'. This is also accompanied by professional health advice.
- 5.3 Access to self-sampling kits offers the opportunity to move a proportion of attendances out of clinics to convenient online alternatives. The online service offers the option of remote/postal treatment for uncomplicated genital Chlamydia infection to service users aged 16 and older and includes partner notification of a positive test result, STI home sampling kit delivery and supply of appropriate antibiotics.
- 5.4 The contracted service works in collaboration with sexual health services at Lewisham and Greenwich Trust (LGT), as well as with other open access Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) services which are also being remodelled and recommissioned across London to provide fully comprehensive sexual health services for contraception, testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV testing and diagnosis.
- 5.5 Officers have also piloted the testing kits within opportunitisc locations such as adult and young people's substance misuse services and will work with the youth service to optimise distribution.
- 5.6 The service contract is managed by the City of London and monthly reporting is given to local commissioners to enable them to monitor activity and determine cost effectiveness and affordability in both clinic and direct access settings.
- 5.7 Conitnued delivery of the E-Service will ensure continuity of access to a wide range of services online, providing choice to people about how they access services, and to manage demand in clinics to ensure there is capacity to meet more complex clinical needs.
- 5.8 The E-Service continues to support Lewisham's wider SRH service offer, especially in light of the changes to the clinic services delivered by LGT that were agreed by Mayor & Cabinet in November 2022.
- 5.9 Access to e-services for STI testing and treatment and some contraception will remain uncapped to support increased access. Given challenges in access to GP contraception, additional provision was offered through Marie Stopes Initiative and this will also be retained.
- 5.10 'Insight Lewisham' young people's substance misuse and sexual health service will offer additional outreach at youth clubs and other sites across the south of the borough, and support young people with access and navigation of sexual health services at LGT, other trusts, online and in primary care. In addition, Insight has been registered to distribute sexual health self-test kits that form part of the e-Service offer, alongside the cohort that access the New Direction core service delivered by 'Change, Grow, Live (CGL).
- 5.11 London authorities that are signed up to the Pan-London agreement have the authority to extend the current contract to August 2025. There is an option to extend the current arrangement by a further year but a large number of councils have expressed a preference to undertake a procurement excercise. The decision will be informed by a procurement options paper for the relevant commissioners who will undertake the governance and authorisation process for the procurement exercise.

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- 5.12 Information will be shared with officers before March 31st 2023 to inform the necessary preparations to seek authority to buy into the new IAA, if that's the preferred option. Any action will be carried out in the interest of Lewisham residents to allow continued access to suitable SRH choices and options.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The existing service contract with CoL is fully funded from the Public Health Grant and is included within sexual health commissioning budgets. The total proposed value for the service is estimated to be £1million per annum and £2million across the total contract duration of 2 years.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council's Constitution contains requirements about how to procure and manage contracts. These are in the Contract Procedure Rules (Constitution Part IV), some of which are requirements based on the procurement Regulations (Public Contracts Regulations 2015) with which the Council must comply. Those requirements were complied with when the contract was awarded by the City of London.
- 7.2 The contract between the City of London and Preventx was procured on the basis of a 5 year contract with the option to extend for 3 years. The procurement was carried out on behalf of the London Borough of Lewisham and other boroughs. In order to access the contract the Council entered into an Inter Authority Agreement with the City of London and all participating boroughs. The recommendation in the report is to extend the contract for a period of 2 years which is in line with the original procurement. This is a 'Permitted Extension' under the Contract Procedure Rules, being one which was clearly provided for in the original procurement and contract documents (as set out in Rule 17 of the Contracts Procedure Rules, and Regulation 72 of the Procurement Regulations 2015).
- 7.3 The report sets out the reasons why this extension is proposed. It notes that the performance of the incumbent provider is satisfactory, and that the future of the service will be considered and brought back to Mayor and Cabinet for a decision.
- 7.4 The extension of this contract is not Key Decision under the Constitution because the value of the extension is more than £700,000.

8 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The proposals within this report specifically aim to address improve equity of access across the borough, and improve the reach of the programme.
- 8.2. As with many health outcomes, sexual health is patterned by socioeconomic inequalities, with those from deprived areas at greater risk of negative outcomes, such as sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy. HIV rates are much higher in men who have sex with men, and in Black African communities
- 8.3. An Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA) was undertaken for the LSL Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy. The Strategy and Local Action Plan aim to reduce health inequalities and improve health outcomes. A Rapid Impact Assessment of Covid-19 is currently underway across the whole of the Sexual and Reproductive Health System across LSL.
- 8.4. Public Health priorities for sexual and reproductive services include increasing STI testing amongst young people, MSM, black African and black Caribbean communities; increasing HIV testing amongst MSM and black African communities; reducing late diagnosis of HIV.

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- 8.5 Public Health priorities for sexual and reproductive services include increasing STI testing amongst young people, MSM, black African and black Caribbean communities; increasing HIV testing amongst MSM and black African communities; reducing late diagnosis of HIV; and increasing access to contraception and, in particular, long-acting, reversible contraception (LARC) to reduce teenage conceptions, abortions and repeat abortions.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no environmental implications.

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1 Sexual health clinics provide services for people with a range of lifestyles and circumstances and include those who may be vulnerable or at risk.
- 10.2 The wider SRH partnership have effective adult and child safeguarding policies in place to identify and support such individuals.
- 10.3 Service provision and pathways to a range of relevant support services are in place for those who engage in risky sexual behaviours, those who are using alcohol and drugs, those who have experienced sexual violence, coercion, or intimate partner violence.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 The proposal supports delivery of Lewisham's Health and Wellbeing strategy by promoting and maintaining access to open access sexual health services. This is essential given the borough has higher rates of poor sexual health, harmful drug and alcohol use and HIV prevalence in comparison to London averages.
- 11.2 These commissioned services support the Council's strategic objectives for sexual health and the achievement of declared outcomes for population health and reducing health inequalities as outlined in priorities contained in the LSL Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2019-24 and sexual health related Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs).

12. Social Value implications

- 12.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires that when the Council is procuring services above the EU threshold it must consider, before commencing a procurement process, how the procurement might improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area. It must also consider how the procurement might be conducted so as to secure that improvement. The matters to be considered must only be those relevant to the services to be procured; and it must be proportionate in all the circumstances to take those matters into account. These requirements are part of the Council's Constitution (Part IV.I Contract Procedure Rules).
- 12.2 The Council's Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice will be applied to this contract. This sets out various social, environmental and economic considerations to be applied. The purpose is to ensure that products and services are sourced and produced responsibly; to maximise resource and energy efficiency in the manufacturing and supply of goods and services in order to minimise environmental impacts; and to deliver outstanding value for money over the entire lifetime of the contract.
- 12.3 In addition, the service will ensure minimum pay rates in line with prevailing London

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Living Wage (LLW) or above where applicable.

13. Background papers

- 13.1 Request for authority to participate in the Inter Authority Agreement for the Pan-London sexual health 'e-service' contract for online testing



ED report e-service
1 6 17.pdf

- 13.2 COVID-19 Related Extensions by Directorate Report - 2nd March 2021



COVID-19
Extensions - Commu

14. Glossary



glossary
standard.pdf

15. Report author(s) and contact

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Appendix A.

List of related authorities participating in the London On-Line Sexual Health Service (27 London councils)

Barnet

Bexley

Brent

Bromley

Camden

City of London

Ealing

Enfield

Hackney

Hammersmith and Fulham

Haringey

Harrow

Havering

Islington

Kensington and Chelsea

Kingston upon Thames

Lambeth

Lewisham

Merton

Newham

Redbridge

Richmond upon Thames

Southwark

Tower Hamlets

Waltham Forest

Wandsworth

Westminster

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