



## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**6<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSION</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report seeks agreement from the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee to progress proposed commissioning intentions for Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in Wirral.

Wirral Council is legally obliged to provide, or make arrangements for the provision of, open access Sexual and Reproductive Health Services. Current commissioning arrangements expire at the end of the financial year 2023/24.

Good sexual and reproductive health is an important component of overall health and wellbeing, and a pillar of wider work to reduce health inequalities in Wirral.

The report supports the implementation of the Wirral Plan 2021 – 26 priorities, Brighter Futures and Active and Healthy Lives.

The proposed actions affect all wards within the borough.

The decisions requested are key decisions.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is recommended to:

1. Authorise the Director of Public Health to commence the re-commissioning of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for an initial period of five years (1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029) with the option of two one-year extensions. The expenditure for the services will be no more than £20,300,000 (£2,900,000 per annum) over the seven-year term.
2. Agree that delegated authority be given to the Director of Public Health formalise the agreement with the successful party/ies following the commissioning process.

3. Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Director of Public Health, to finalise the associated legal documentation relating to the commissions.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 To allow Public Health to implement the commissioning intentions for Wirral's Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services as outlined in this report.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 No other options were considered. SRH services, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, and treatment and contraception are mandated (prescribed functions) within the Local Authority Public Health ring fenced grant. It is necessary to recommission the services highlighted in order to comply with Public Contract Regulations and Wirral Council Contract Procedure rules.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Under the Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013 (Part 2, Regulation 6), Local Authorities are legally required to provide, or make arrangements to secure the provision of, open access sexual health services in their respective local area.
- 3.2 Good sexual and reproductive health is dependent on high quality accessible services that empower residents and enable them to make informed choices to look after their own sexual health and wellbeing. As with many health-related conditions, the burden of sexual ill health is seen disproportionately by people experiencing poverty, people from ethnic minority groups, young people and people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer plus (LGBTQ+) community.
- 3.3 Wirral's SRH Service, 'Sexual Health Wirral' is delivered by Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (WCHC), in partnership with Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust, Brook and SH:24. Sexual Health Wirral provides an integrated STI and contraception service offering free sexual health screens, treatment, results management and advice on STIs as well as delivering the full range of contraception (and contraception counselling) people of all ages. WCHC also subcontract to GP practices to provide specialised methods of contraception such as coils or implants in primary care as well as with local pharmacies to offer free emergency contraception.
- 3.4 Sahir House is the local provider commissioned to deliver services around HIV prevention and support. The service takes a risk reduction approach to target high risk individuals, in particularly men who have sex with men. The service works closely with the staff of the HIV treatment service and Sexual Health Wirral to facilitate service user access to sexual health testing and treatment services as well as providing HIV point of care testing to service users directly. The service acts in an advisory capacity on LGBTQ+ sexual health and related issues across the health and social care economy. The service also offers a non-clinical support service to Wirral residents living with HIV to address health and social issues that impact on their health and wellbeing. The service offers time bound counselling and promotes a model of positive prevention and self-management.

- 3.5 Five-year contracts (with the option to extend for 2 years) were awarded to Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (as the lead provider of the Integrated Sexual Health Service) and to Sahir House (HIV Prevention and Support) following a tender process in 2016. Contracts commenced on the 1 April 2017 and are due to end on the 31 March 2024. To ensure compliance with Public Contract Regulations and Wirral Council contract procedure rules it is necessary to retender these services.
- 3.6 The recommissions provide an opportunity to review sexual and reproductive health service requirements to ensure we have the right funding and delivery models in place. A sexual and reproductive health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is currently underway to help inform and shape the provision of Wirral's future sexual and reproductive health services, to prioritise and identify key areas for development and ensure that any decisions are based on the available evidence. The JSNA will include quantitative data on sexual and reproductive health in Wirral, alongside qualitative research involving key groups to best inform service development. A national integrated sexual health services specification is available for local authorities to adapt for their own use and will provide the framework for the new contract(s).
- 3.7 The commissions will support delivery against five key sexual health indicators included within the Public Health Outcomes Framework:
- Total prescribed Long-acting Reversible Contraception
  - Under 18 and Under 16 conceptions
  - Chlamydia detection (15-24yrs olds)
  - New STI diagnoses
  - HIV late diagnosis and Under 18 conceptions.

Progress against these indicators can be viewed in the UK Health Security Agency report that summarises the latest available sexual and reproductive health data for Wirral: Summary profile of local authority sexual health Wirral, 27 January 2022.

- 3.8 A high-level overview of data from the JSNA shows that Wirral currently has:
- lower rates of STIs than national levels, in the context of lower testing rates, and lower 15 – 24 chlamydia detection rates.
  - Low rates of HIV, but higher rates of late diagnosis.
  - High rates of abortions and under 18 conceptions, and low utilisation of long-acting reversible contraception.

Priority areas for improvement for the new service will be guided the Public Health Outcomes Framework, and more in-depth review of findings from the JSNA.

- 3.9 The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the delivery of sexual health services; provision had to shift rapidly from predominantly face-to-face clinics to a scaled up remote offer including telephone and video consultations, STI postal testing and medication home delivery. Clinic appointments had to meet strict urgent criteria only and all walk-in appointments were stopped. In addition to the pandemic,

the national mpox outbreak delayed full remobilisation as sexual health services responded to the evolving situation.

- 3.10 All face-to-face services have now resumed, with a mix of bookable and walk in appointments available. The enhanced remote offer developed during COVID-19 continues to provide alternative, accessible provision and remains a popular choice by many service users. Activity has returned to levels comparable to before the pandemic.
- 3.11 The current contracts will continue during the recommissioning process and a period of service mobilisation will be built into the tender process to ensure there is no loss of service and a seamless transition for existing service users is maintained.
- 3.12 All Public Health contracts are subject to on-going evaluation as part of a clearly defined commissioning cycle, which is designed to maximise return on investment and improve outcomes. This methodology ensures that Public Health services (and contracts) are consistently and routinely tested against a range of criteria. Criteria against which contracts are tested include the following:
  - Evidence base e.g., academic research, engagement feedback, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
  - Performance of targets e.g., financial and activity based and outcomes against plans and benchmarking information.
  - Value for money
  - National policy and technical guidance e.g., Public Health Outcomes Framework
  - Strategic direction e.g., Wirral Plan strategic aspirations (narrowing the gap in life expectancy), delivery of Public Health outcomes through council services.
  - Legal and contractual frameworks e.g., incorporate national updates to contract templates used for NHS providers.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The ringfenced Public Health grant currently funds the services highlighted. The value and availability of the Public Health grant for 2024//25 onwards is not yet known. The budget has been allocated based on the grant funding being consistent with this financial year. Should the grant vary and be reduced then contract amounts may need to be varied, and the proposed tender exercises will consider appropriate mitigating measures.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The recommissioning of the service detailed within this report are compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Wirral Council Contract Procedure rules.
- 5.2 The Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013 (Part 2, Regulation 6) state that each local authority shall provide, or shall make arrangements to secure the provision of, open access sexual health services in its area for.

- i) preventing the spread of sexually transmitted infections;
- ii) treating, testing and caring for people with such infections; and
- iii) notifying sexual partners of people with such infections.

This duty is made under the Council's general duty under Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (T.U.P.E.) may be applicable. The incumbent provider will provide the Council with anonymised details of staff engaged in the provision of relevant services, who may be subject to TUPE. This information will be shared with the tender documentation. It is the responsibility of tenderers to liaise with incumbent suppliers to establish whether TUPE regulations apply to the contract and to ensure that TUPE information provided by incumbent suppliers is accurate.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 It is necessary to recommission the services highlighted in order to comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and Wirral Council Contract Procedure rules. There is always a risk of disruption to service provision during service redesign, recommissioning and commencement of new services. To mitigate against this and minimise disruption, adequate time to plan for, and implement the mobilisation of new services, is built into the procurement process between contract award and commencement.
- 7.2 The procurement process is also subject to scrutiny and at risk of legal challenge. Particular regard is given to contract procedure rules and relevant legislation at all stages of the process and the Public Health team works closely with the Procurement team to ensure compliance.
- 7.3 In the current challenging financial climate, the impact of any future reductions in budget or policy implications on the amount of funding available for Public Health is unknown. The value and availability of the Public Health grant for 2024/25 onwards is not yet known. This risk will be mitigated by the insertion of appropriate termination clauses in the contracts.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 In order to inform the development and design of the future service, engagement and consultation will be undertaken with key partners, stakeholders and local communities. This will include:
- Qualitative insight work with local residents and service users to help shape the provision of future services.
  - Engagement with current local providers of sexual health and reproductive health services to draw on their knowledge and experiences.

- Engagement with other key stakeholders in the local sexual and reproductive health system, including primary care, NHS commissioners and acute care providers.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone.
- 9.2 Providers will need to demonstrate their commitment to eliminate discrimination and ensure equality rights of people with protected characteristics, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 within their tender submission. Equality contract clauses are included within the Public Health contract and compliance will be routinely monitored over the lifetime of the contract. Equality implications will be a consideration from tender evaluation, contract reward and monitoring.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 During the procurement process, bids will be evaluated on any social value added to the service. Bidders will need to consider and demonstrate how they can have a positive impact on Wirral's environment and climate.
- 10.2 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no direct impact on emissions of carbon dioxide.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Ensuring equitable access to sexual and reproductive health services will contribute to community wealth building. Any ill health can have negative economic consequences, ensuring good sexual and reproductive health will contribute to reducing the economic impact of ill health in Wirral.
- 11.2 A key strategic aim for Wirral's sexual and reproductive health is to reduce unplanned pregnancies by improving access to long-acting reversible contraception. Wirral has high rates of teenage conceptions and abortions, which can negatively affect young women's and girls' educational and employment outcomes. Women and girls in more deprived areas are disproportionately impacted.

**REPORT AUTHOR:**     **Name: Dr Elspeth Anwar**  
                                  **Public Health Consultant AD**  
                                  telephone: 0151 666 5177  
                                  email: elspethanwar@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

N/A

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

UK Health Security Agency. Summary profile of local authority sexual health Wirral, 27 January 2022. Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust, Wirral Council Public Health Contract (Integrated Sexual Health Service) 2017 – 2022. DN176000

Sahir House, Wirral Council Public Health Contract (Specialist HIV Prevention and Support Service) 2017-2022. DN176000

Department of Health and Social Care/ Public Health England. Integrated Sexual Health Services: A suggested national service specification. August 2018.

The National Health Service Act 2006

The Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee in accordance with Section 2.2(c) of its Terms of Reference:

All Public Health functions (in co-ordination with those functions reserved to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's statutory health functions)

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
N/A	