

From: Dan Watkins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
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To: Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee - 7 November 2023

Subject: **SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES – CURRENT COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: The paper provides an overview of the current commissioning arrangements for sexual health services provided to Kent residents by Kent County Council and by wider partners.

Recommendation(s): The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the current commissioning arrangements for sexual health services.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has a statutory responsibility to provide specific sexual health services to Kent residents. These include testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), access to a broad range of contraception as well as the provision of sexual health advice.
- 1.2 To meet these statutory obligations, KCC commissions a range of sexual health services. These are:
- integrated specialist sexual health services
 - an online STI testing service.
 - Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) in Primary Care
 - a condom programme for under 25-year-olds
 - psychosexual therapy
 - emergency oral contraception (EOC)
 - access to treatment of simple chlamydia in commissioned Community Pharmacies.

KCC is also responsible for sourcing venue arrangements for the Integrated Sexual Health Services.

- 1.3 In addition to the KCC commissioned sexual health services, NHS England (NHSE) and the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board have statutory

responsibilities to commission other sexual health services. Together, these services make up the commissioned sexual healthcare system.

- 1.4 A transformation programme is currently underway to review and further improve KCC commissioned public health services in the long-term, and sexual health is within scope of this exercise.

2. Background

- 2.1 Under The Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013¹, local authorities are mandated to deliver comprehensive sexual health services. These services encompass the prevention, testing, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and advice on and access to a broad range of contraceptive methods. This commitment aligns with the objectives outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan² and the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) Women's Health Strategy for England³.
- 2.2 Commissioning responsibility for sexual health services is split across KCC, NHSE, and the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System (ICS)⁴.

Table 1
Commissioning Responsibility of KCC Partners

ICS	NHSE
Most abortion services	Contraception provided as an additional service under the GP contract
Sterilisation	HIV treatment and care (including drug costs for post-exposure prophylaxis following sexual exposure (PEPSE) for outpatient and inpatients
Vasectomy	Promotion of opportunistic testing and treatment for STIs and patient-requested testing by GPs
Non-sexual-health elements of psychosexual health services	Sexual health elements of prison health services
Gynaecology, including any use of contraception for non-contraceptive purposes	Sexual assault referral centres
	Cervical screening

¹ [The Local Authorities \(Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2013/50001/1/1)

² [NHS Long Term Plan](https://www.nhs.uk/longtermplan/)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/womens-health-strategy-for-england>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/commissioning-regional-and-local-sexual-health-services#:~:text=and%20sexual%20rights,-.Commissioning%20responsibilities,contraception%2C%20relationships%20and%20unplanned%20pregnancy.>

	Specialist foetal medicine services

2.3 Commissioning of the aforementioned sexual health services varies greatly across England, due to differences in commissioning arrangements and contractual models used in local areas.

3. Current Sexual Health Services Commissioned by KCC

3.1 KCC commissions four providers to deliver sexual health services in Kent. These are Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW), Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT), METRO and Primary Care. KCC is in partnership agreements with MTW and KCHFT for delivery of sexual health services and has traditional contracting relationships with both METRO and Primary Care.

Table 2:
Breakdown of providers and sexual health services commissioned by KCC

Provider	Commissioned Service	Area
KCHFT	Specialist Integrated sexual health service including HIV and Long-Acting Reversible Contraception	East Kent
	Psychosexual Therapy	Kent wide
	Community pharmacy for emergency oral contraception and simple chlamydia treatment	Kent wide
MTW	Specialist Integrated Sexual Health service including HIV	North and West Kent
	Online STI testing	Kent wide
METRO	Condom programme- for under 25-year-olds	Kent wide
Primary Care	Long-Acting Reversible Contraception	Kent wide

3.2 The specialist Integrated Sexual Health (ISH) Service offers open access to its users, which include STI testing and treatment, a comprehensive range of contraceptive options, as well as health promotion, prevention and relevant vaccination. It is available for all Kent residents following initial triage. As the service is open access, it can also be accessed by people who do not live in Kent and cross charging arrangements are in place to facilitate payments and charges with other local authorities. In the year 2022/2023 a total of 64,025 people accessed the ISH Service.

3.3 To enhance the intergration and continuity of care for people who use our services, KCC entered into a Section 75 Agreement with NHSE. This agreement enables KCC to commission treatment and management of HIV

services on behalf of NHSE until March 2024. As noted in 2.2, the responsibility for commissioning of HIV services falls under the purview of NHSE. Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006⁵ contains powers enabling NHS bodies to exercise certain local authority functions and for local authorities to exercise certain NHS functions.

- 3.4 NHSE provides funding to KCC on an annual basis, and this is used to fund HIV services provided by MTW and KCHFT as part of the specialist Integrated Sexual Health Service. The HIV service is open access and available to Kent and non Kent residents with a HIV diagnosis. The service provides ongoing treatment and long-term management of the disease. Negotiations are currently underway with NHSE around the future commissioning of the HIV service. It is important to note that nationally, the responsibility for this service is likely to be transferred to the ICS sometime in 2024/2025. This is set out in the NHS document *Roadmap for integrating specialised services within Intergrated Care Systems*⁶.
- 3.5 The online STI testing is provided by MTW as part of the partnership arrangement with KCC. MTW subcontracts sh.uk to provide a confidential, high quality online STI testing service which enables Kent residents to order, receive, complete, and return a STI testing kit in discreet pre-paid packaging. The service is overseen by an 'E-bureau' function, which provides clinical governance and supports people along the clinical pathway based on data collected during triage and whether a STI has been detected or a reactive test has been identified. In 2022/2023, there were 46,312 kits ordered and returned, with an average return rate of 75%.
- 3.6 The Community Pharmacy Sexual Health Service is provided by KCHFT for Kent as part of the partnership arrangement with KCC. KCHFT subcontracts with over 100 pharmacies in Kent to offer a supply of Emergency Oral Contraception (EOC) to under 30-year-olds following a structured consultation. The service also provides treatment for simple chlamydia following a diagnosis and referral from an ISH clinic or the online STI testing service. In 2022/2023, a total of 2,989 people received EOC and 821 people received chlamydia treatment from the pharmacy.
- 3.7 The Kent Psychosexual Therapy Service is also provided by KCHFT and offers help for people presenting with psychosexual dysfunction. The service can be accessed online or in person and it is available to any eligible Kent resident who is referred by a health care professional. During the 2022/2023 period, a total of 509 people sought access to the Psychosexual Therapy Service.
- 3.8 The Kent condom programme is provided by METRO. It offers free condoms to under 25-year-olds living in Kent via online access or through in person collection at distribution sites across Kent. METRO also provides training to professionals who work with young people, including youth services and schools, to increase their understanding of sexual health and to promote awareness of local relevant services. Between 2022/2023, a total of 10,864 free

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/41/section/75>

⁶ [PAR1440-specialised-commissioning-roadmap-addendum-may-2022.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

packs of condoms, each containing six condoms, were distributed throughout Kent.

- 3.9 Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) in primary care is provided by over 100 GPs across Kent. This service provides the fitting and removal of LARC devices, which offer a long-term contraceptive benefit of at least three years and up to six years depending on the LARC device used. LARC is also provided as part of the ISH offer, by KCHFT and MTW, which manages more complex LARC needs. In 2022/2023 there were 12,297 procedures carried out in primary care.
- 3.10 In addition, the ICS commissions GPs to provide the Intrauterine System (IUS) LARC method as part of the Women's Health Service offer, which is for non-contraceptive purpose. In this context, an IUS may be fitted to manage symptoms including menorrhagia, dysfunctional bleeding, and to provide hormonal replacement therapy (HRT).
- 3.11 Sexual Health Outreach Services are provided by MTW, KCHFT, and METRO, and target those at highest risk of poor sexual health outcomes. Outreach is delivered at a variety of community settings and events including Freshers Fayres, LGBTQ+ pride, reception centres for asylum seekers and youth hubs amongst others.
- 3.12 KCC arranges and pays for the premises required to offer integrated sexual health services, and this arrangement provides long-term service continuity regardless of which provider is delivering the service.
- 3.13 The KCC website has a dedicated section for sexual health (www.kent.gov.uk/sexualhealth) and is referred to as the first point of access into KCC commissioned sexual health services. It contains information on STIs, contraception, services available as well as access routes into these services.

4 Future Commissioning

- 4.1 Public health is currently leading on a transformation programme of public health services. The primary objective is to assess the services to ensure they are impactful, cost-effective, and robust for the future. Sexual Health Services are in scope for the transformation programme, drawing insight from successful models in other areas and relying on evidence-based strategies to enhance delivery. Future updates on this programme of work will be shared with the committee.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The responsibility for commissioning sexual health services is distributed among KCC, NHSE, and the Integrated Care System.
- 5.2 KCC commissions sexual health services from various healthcare providers using a range of commissioning arrangements, demonstrating a commitment to a holistic and interconnected approach to sexual health in Kent.

- 5.3 The ISH Service operates under an open-access model, allowing not only Kent residents but also people from outside the county to utilise its services. Likewise, Kent residents have the flexibility to access services offered outside the county as well.
- 5.4 The ongoing transformation program aims to enhance the quality and sustainability of these services, ensuring they continue to meet the evolving needs of Kent residents.

6. Recommendation(s)

6.1 Recommendation: The Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the current commissioning arrangements for sexual health services.

7. Background Documents

- [Performance Report Q4.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Local Authorities \(Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [NHS Long Term Plan](#)
- [Women's Health Strategy for England 2022](#)
- [Commissioning local HIV and sexual and reproductive health service guidance](#)
- [National integrated sexual health service specification 2023](#)
- [National Health Service Act 2006, Section 75](#)

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