

Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Policy Review 2015 – 2016

Review of ‘Core Sexual Health Services in Sunderland’

Draft Report

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1. Foreword

The Public Health Wellness and Culture Scrutiny Panel undertook a secondary review into sexual health, with a focus on sexually transmitted infections and services, particularly the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) service. The need for increased awareness about Sexual Health Services was identified and the Panel requested that the perceived stigma of attending the service linked to its present location and premises should be investigated. Risks associated with the impact of this were considered alongside evidence of the quality and outcomes of the service.

It is recognised that young people and younger adults are more likely to be more sexually active, and therefore make up a higher percentage of service users of this particular service. Sexual health may also be a subject that some older people find embarrassing and uncomfortable to discuss. If embarrassment or discomfort prevent people from utilising the services, then this poses risks to the health of the population as anyone who is sexually active – whatever their age – may be at risk from sexually transmitted infections. It is therefore important to recognise how services could be promoted and improved and to ensure take up and participation by all representations and age groups.

The Panel found that a lot of positive work was being undertaken by the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) and Contraceptive and Sexual Health Services (CASH), but believe that there is room to improve further. The Panel has made recommendations in this review to address this.

The Panel hopes that this review and its findings will make a useful contribution to the improvement of Sexual Health Services for the residents of Sunderland.



Councillor George Howe
Lead Scrutiny Member, Public Health Wellness and Culture

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This review was commissioned as it was identified by the Scrutiny Committee that Sexual Health Services and Sexually Transmitted Infections were an issue affecting local ward residents of the City of Sunderland. The Panel requested that the perceived stigma of attending GUM services, due to their current premises and location would need to be investigated, alongside a consideration of the quality and outcomes of the service.

3. Aim of Review

- 3.1 The aim of the review was to look at the issue of Sexual Health and Sexually Transmitted Infections across the City, the provision of core sexual health services – in particular the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic – to meet the needs of the local population, and the impact this has on the residents of Sunderland.

4. Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The review set out to:

- Gather information from commissioners and providers of core sexual health services (GUM and CASH) and from patient feedback mechanisms
- Consider the information gathered in relation to the scope of the review
- Look at the services provided, including through a visit to the GUM service
- Consider how the services meet the needs of local people
- Review the impact that the services and provision available has on the Sexual Health of local residents

5. Membership of the Shadow Committee

- 5.1 The membership of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year is outlined below:

Cllrs Jill Fletcher (Scrutiny Lead Member for Health, Housing and Adult Services), George Howe (Lead Member for Public Health, Wellness and Culture), Rebecca Atkinson, Richard Bell, Rosalind Copeland, John Cummings, Michael Dixon, Alan Emerson, Louise Farthing, Juliana Heron, Julia Jackson, Shirley Leadbitter, Barbara McClennan, Paul Middleton, Dorothy Trueman, Doris Turner and Geoff Walker.

6. Method of Investigation

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Panel received a presentation from City Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (the provider), undertook a visit to and tour of the GUM Clinic at Sunderland Royal Hospital in October 2015, and sought information on service user feedback from external partners such as the Live Life Well service and considered information from a range of sources and reports.

- 6.2 The Panel had support from the Council's public health team, who together with the Integrated Commissioning Team, are responsible for commissioning open access sexual health services.
- 6.3 This review considered information from a range of data sources, which are listed in section 11 of this report. A selection of public information sources about sexual health and sexual health services can be found in the Appendix to this report.

7. Findings of the Review

Findings relate to the main themes raised during the panel's investigations and evidence gathering.

7.1 Sexual Health facts and figures for Sunderland

7.1.1 Sexually transmitted infections can affect anyone, but are more common in people aged under 25 years. They can have long lasting effects on health, including cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. In Sunderland, the rate of diagnosis for most common sexually transmitted infections is below or similar to the England average. Exceptions are gonorrhoea with a diagnosis rate of 88.0 per 100,000 (compared to 63.3 per 100,000 for England) in 2014 and genital warts with a diagnosis rate of 163.0 per 100,000 (compared to 128.4 per 100,000 for England) in 2014.

7.1.2 Sunderland has a significantly lower diagnosed prevalence of HIV than the England average 0.72 per 1,000 persons aged 15-59 compared to 2.14 per 1,000 persons aged 15-59 in 2013; though a higher proportion of Sunderland cases (50%) receive a late diagnosis than the England average (45%).

7.1.3 Reducing the burden of poor sexual health requires sustained approaches to support early detection, successful treatment and partner notification in conjunction with access to a full range of contraception choices alongside safe sex health promotion and the promotion of safer sexual behaviour.

7.1.4 Information provided directly to the Panel from the GUM clinic staff included:

- There were 24,342 attendances at the GUM clinic in 2014
- The predominant age group seen in the GUM clinic is 16-24 year olds
- Over the last 10 years, there has been a 99% increase in the number of first attenders aged 45+ years attending the GUM clinic
- Rapid access to appointments has improved with 96% of patients seen within 48 hours of contacting the service in 2014 (compared to 69% in 2012)
- Published data shows that in 2014/15, across the North East of England, around 12% of women who accessed contraceptive services were using an intra-uterine device (IUD) or intra-uterine system (IUS) as their main method of contraception.
- The number of people that have been fitted with IUD in the last two years was 644 in 2013/14 and 748 in 2014/15

7.2 What Sexual Health Services are available?

7.2.1 Core sexual health services within Sunderland are currently provided by City Hospitals Sunderland. This includes Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) and Contraceptive and Sexual Health (CASH) services. Both services have their core bases at the main City Hospitals site, but also provide some services on an outreach basis, though satellite clinics across the City. The main hospital site provides a full range of services including more complex

testing and treatment (level 3 services) whilst satellites provide basic testing and treatment (level 1 and 2 services only).

7.2.2 Services provided by the GUM clinic include:

- Screening and treatment of all sexually transmitted infections
- HIV, Hepatitis B and C testing
- Management of HIV patients
- Management of genital dermatological conditions and genital pain
- Management of non-sexually acquired genital infections
- Emergency contraception, contraceptive advice and signposting
- Health promotion and advice to patients
- Education and support of primary care and other health care providers, both voluntary and NHS
- Hepatitis B vaccination to those at risk
- Medical screening for patients referred with psychosexual problems
- Opportunistic cervical screening
- Non forensic management of sexual assault
- Assessment of genital symptoms post gender reassignment surgery
- Condom provision and the C-card scheme

7.2.3 The current service provision, although described as an “integrated sexual health service”, is for separate GUM and CASH services operating from different premises on the Sunderland Royal Hospital site. The GUM service operates from a “tired looking building” located at one side of a car park away from the main hospital building. The CASH service operates from new accommodation in Chester Lodge. All staff are dual trained in both GUM and contraceptive services, though many staff have a clearly expressed preference for one or the other. Both services use the same integrated IT system with careful confidentiality controls; electronic records can be accessed at both sites. However, some patients do require cross referral between GUM and CASH.

7.2.4 Commissioners have a clear preference for a fully integrated sexual health service and have previously had discussions with City Hospitals Sunderland about the need for co-location to improve patient experience, though this has not been achieved. Staff within the GUM services have streamlined their care processes and believe that the current building “works well for them”.

7.2.5 Within this review, there have been mixed reports about the desirability or otherwise of fully integrated services such as those provided at the [New Croft Centre](#) in Newcastle.

7.2.6 Additional sexual health services are provided within primary care (e.g., long acting reversible contraceptive methods) pharmacy (e.g., emergency hormonal contraception) and through the Chlamydia screening programme and C-Card service.

7.3 **Service activity and capacity**

7.3.1 In its Annual Report for 2014, City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust has stated that workloads within the sexual health service have increased, even though total numbers of cases have not risen.

7.3.2 This was ascribed to changes in the number of cases of some particular conditions, specifically gonorrhoea, and the HIV cohort, and referrals from other healthcare settings. Due to their participation in the regional sexual health network, the Trust is aware that other similar services within the region have seen significantly higher numbers of attendances than was historically the case. Plans to introduce an “express service” in Sunderland to allow for anticipated higher demand are being developed.

7.3.3 During 2014, the GUM service supported the CASH service to offer routine HIV and Syphilis testing in addition to chlamydia and gonorrhoea screening; this initiative will be reviewed during 2015. Cost-saving initiatives were a priority for the GUM service in 2014.

7.4 **Prevention and outreach activity**

7.4.1 Panel members were particularly interested in what work was being done with schools in relation to sex and relationships education. Sunderland City Council’s Risk and Resilience Team has developed a package of sex and relationships education for primary schools, but its adoption and use is not compulsory. Sunderland’s [“Your Health”](#) website includes information and advice for young people and also a speakeasy resource for parents. There is an increasing demand for this.

7.4.2 The Sunderland Live Life Well service is commissioned by the Council’s public health and integrated commissioning teams and provided by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust in collaboration with NECA (North East Council on addictions). It provides some direct delivery of health improvement activity and supports other organisations through training and signposting. In relation to sexual health, the service aims to improve sexual health and access to services by:

- Providing information and advice, including supporting campaigns
- Signposting to services
- Free, confidential motivational support for lifestyle changes
- Outreach approaches to groups at higher risk
- Supply of free test kits for Chlamydia and gonorrhoea
- Provision of condoms to C-card and other condom distribution schemes across the City
- Supporting access to training for health professionals and Health Champions

7.4.3 The Live Life Well service outreach activity included “door knock” sessions for students during Fresher’s week at the University of Sunderland. For 2015/16 Fresher’s week, over a three week period, only 1 out of 300 students in the halls of residence knew where the Sunderland Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic was located. This highlighted the need for greater marketing and publicity for the service.

- 7.4.4 NECA holds the contract for the provision of a Chlamydia Screening Office for Sunderland and provides postal testing kits for dual Chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing. Outreach activity to the University of Sunderland involves working closely with the university's pastoral care services. Over the last three years this has resulted in 776 persons aged 15-24 years undertaking a sexual health screening and 30 persons aged 15-24 receiving a positive test result (a positivity rate of 3.86%).
- 7.4.5 Sexual health outreach activities provided by the Live Life Well service are well used. Uptake rates are highest in Sunderland East and lowest in Coalfields and Washington.
- 7.4.6 It was reported that a healthcare assistant from the Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) service is currently undertaking outreach work with sex workers in the City.

7.5 **Service User engagement and feedback**

- 7.5.1 The Panel considered information from service user feedback from a range of sources including the findings from the 2013 Review of Sexual Health Services, feedback reported to City Hospitals by their service users and engagement activity undertaken by the Live Life Well service.
- 7.5.2 The 2013 Review of Sexual Health Services included engagement work with persons aged over 16 using surveys, focus groups, interviews and workshops and engagement with young people using focus groups and questionnaires. The summary of themes and findings from this work was as follows:

Awareness

- There is a need for information about services (what, where, when, how)
- There is a need for better marketing and promotion of the service
- Confidentiality is an issue for all services users, but is particularly important for under 16s and bisexuals
- Anonymity is extremely important and people may not want to access services close to where they live

Access

- Professionals and organisations thought access was generally good
- People felt that some services were too centralised (the hub and spoke model has now taken level 2 services into the five areas of Sunderland)
- There is a need to offer services at different locations and at different times
- People like a mixture of appointments and drop-in provision

Accessibility and Equality

- Services were viewed as being “for young people” and more work is needed to raise awareness amongst older people (access by people aged 45+ has risen and continues to rise)
- Services need to do more to better meet the needs of particular groups e.g. physical and learning disabilities, youth offenders
- Attitudes of staff can be a barrier
- Information available is not for people with learning disabilities

Stigma and Embarrassment

- Stigma and embarrassment can be a powerful barrier to accessing services
- This view was highlighted by both the public and professionals
- Attitudes of some staff are a barrier as they may have become desensitised to the issue of stigma
- Privacy is really important to people, for example in reception areas when booking in for services

7.5.3 Service user feedback reported by City Hospitals Sunderland from their direct patient feedback was as follows:

- The Patient Satisfaction Survey 2013 showed that 67% patients thought clinic was easy to find and 98% commented that the surroundings were appealing/very appealing
- Sexual health service responses to the Friends and Family Test have never fallen below 92% and majority of responses are 100% positive
- Service user feedback showed that the clinics were non-judgemental and discreet and that patients felt at ease.

7.5.4 Service user feedback about the GUM service collected via the Live Life Well service and NECA was as follows:

- The skills and competence of the staff in both the GUM service and the CASH service are excellent, and feedback about the staff is usually positive
- Despite the separate GUM and CASH services and the need for some cross referral between them, there is little feedback from service users about this
- Service users report feeling self-conscious as it is apparent ‘why’ they are attending the GUM service building and co-location of the two services would help to address this
- The service needs to be better promoted and awareness raising is particularly important given the presence of an asymptomatic strain of antibiotic resistant syphilis, and the increase in asymptomatic gonorrhoea
- There is a need for improvement in the accommodation/environment of the clinic

7.6 Commissioning arrangements

7.6.1 Sexual health is one of a small number of legally mandated public health services. Each local authority must provide or make arrangements for the provision of open access sexual health services.

7.6.2 Different commissioners in the system are responsible for different aspects of sexual health (see table below):

Local Authority	CCG	NHS England
Contraception (but excluding through GPs)	Abortion services	Contraception (through GPs)
STI testing (including HIV)	Sterilisation	HIV treatment and care
STI treatment (excluding HIV)	Vasectomy	Promotion of opportunistic testing and treatment for STIs
Sexual health aspects of psychosocial counselling	Non-sexual health aspects of psychosocial counselling	Patient requested testing by GPs
Any sexual health specialist services	Gynaecology (including use of contraceptive devices for non-contraceptive purposes)	Sexual health elements of prison health services
		Sexual Assault Referral Centres
		Cervical screening

7.6.3 As patients are entitled to access any sexual health service anywhere, arrangements are in place for cross charging between local authorities so that each authority pays for the activity for its residents.

7.6.4 Data from GUMCAD for 2014 shows that there were 6,083 patient attendances at the Sunderland service, as follows:

- 4918 (81%) were resident in Sunderland
- 716 (12%) were resident in County Durham
- 170 (3%) were resident in South Tyneside
- 104 (2%) were resident outside the UK
- 47 (1%) were resident in Gateshead

7.6.5 Data from GUMCAD for 2014 also shows that there were 5,905 patient attendances at sexual health services by Sunderland residents, as follows:

- 4918 (83%) City Hospitals Sunderland
- 333 (6%) Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals

- 207 (4%) Gateshead Health
- South Tyneside 173 (3%)
- County Durham 132 (2%)
- No other GUM clinic was attended by more than 1% of all the people resident in Sunderland

7.6.6 Commissioned services conform to evidence based guidance from [NICE](#) and from the [British Association for Sexual Health and HIV](#) (BASHH).

8. Conclusion

The Panel has made the following conclusions from this review:

1. There is a need to tackle and reduce stigma in relation to the use of sexual health services
2. Co-location of the CASH and GUM services is desirable
3. Older adults are under-represented within the population making use of services and work should be done to raise awareness of the sexual health needs for this group and the services provided (e.g., erectile dysfunction, problems arising from menopause)
4. The panel consider the uptake from a broader range of service users to be paramount

9. Draft Recommendations

9.1 The Shadow Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has taken evidence from a variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations to the Cabinet are as outlined below:-

- (a) That Commissioners should consider earnestly the co-location of the GUM and CASH services by the current provider of the service and the possibility that co-location of the services should feature in any future plans to re-commission the service;
- (b) That service providers look to more widely publicise the GUM and CASH services including details of the services available and where, when and how they can be accessed;
- (c) Consideration be given to developing and disseminating information about the sexual health needs of older adults and services available from GUM, CASH and the Live Life Well Service;
- (d) Service Providers and key stakeholders should work together to break down the stigma attached to attending services, such as GUM and CASH;
- (e) Work to target new students in Fresher's week should be undertaken by the CASH and GUM and the Live Life Well Services.

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 The panel is grateful to all of those who have presented evidence and information during the course of this review. We would like to place on record our appreciation to the below named people:

- Joanna Clark, City Hospitals Sunderland
- Andrea Cairns, City Hospitals Sunderland
- Carol Harries, City Hospitals Sunderland
- Allison Dye, City Hospitals Sunderland
- David Messenger NECA (North East Council on Addictions)
- Lorraine Hughes, Sunderland City Council
- Kathryn Bailey, Sunderland City Council

11. Background papers/ references used

- 1 GUM and CASH Service, Sunderland City Hospital
- 2 City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust Annual Report 2014
- 3 The Sunderland Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- 4 The Sexual Health Review undertaken in 2013/14
- 5 Sunderland Sexual and Reproductive Health Profile, Public Health England, July 2015.
- 6 British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) Service standards and guidance
- 7 Feedback from Health Champions
- 8 <http://www.chlamydia-screening.nhs.uk/ys/screen.html>

Appendix: Public information resources for sexual health

Further information is available for Sunderland residents from a range of sources as follows:

- www.brook.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexualhealthtopics/
- www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout/
- www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- www.bpas.org
- www.chlamydia-screening.nhs.uk
- www.checkyourbits.org
- www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout
- www.mesmacnortheast.com
- <http://www.hivpreventionengland.org.uk/Resources>
- <http://www.yourhealthsunderland.com/information-for-parents/relationships-sexual-health/speakeasy/>