

**CABINET MEETING – 13 July 2023**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I**

**Title of Report:**

Commissioning of Child Vision Screening Programme for Reception Children in Sunderland

**Author(s):**

Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities

**Purpose of Report:**

To seek Cabinet's approval of the proposed commissioning intentions for the Child Vision Screening Programme in Sunderland from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is requested to authorise the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care, to undertake all necessary steps to procure and award a new contract for Child Vision Screening in Sunderland for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029 (with an optional extension for up to 24 months thereafter, which will be at the discretion of the Council).

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?      \*Yes**

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

The proposal will ensure the continuation of a Child Vision Screening Programme for children aged 4 to 5 years in Sunderland which meets current and future needs, in accordance with the recommendations of the UK National Screening Committee (NSC). This will support the continued delivery of key health outcomes for children in Sunderland.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

Do nothing – do not procure and award new contract for Child Vision Screening programme. This is not a viable option as children aged 4 to 5 years in Sunderland would not have access to a universal child vision screening programme, which is within scope of the public health functions for children's public health.

**Impacts analysed;**

**Equality**  **Privacy**  **Sustainability**  **Crime and Disorder**

**Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes**

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes**

**Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes**

**COMMISSIONING OF CHILD VISION SCREENING PROGRAMME FOR RECEPTION CHILDREN IN SUNDERLAND**

**REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval of the proposed commissioning intentions for the Child Vision Screening Programme in Sunderland from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029.

**2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to authorise the Executive Director of Health, Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care, to undertake all necessary steps to procure and award a new contract for Child Vision Screening in Sunderland for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029 (with an optional extension for up to 24 months thereafter, which will be at the discretion of the Council).

**3. Introduction/Background**

- 3.1 In England, Local Authorities became responsible for funding vision screening for children aged 4 to 5 years (reception class) in October 2015. Local Authorities have responsibility for a range of public health services including the Healthy Child Programme, of which Screening Programmes are an integral part of the universal offer.
- 3.2 The [UK National Screening Committee](#) continues to recommend vision screening for children aged 4 to 5 years<sup>1</sup> and local authorities remain responsible for commissioning this as part of the [healthy child programme](#) (Guide 2, page 21). The Child Vision Screening Programme is based on available evidence and current guidance on recommended standards for safe practice. The UK NSC recommended that there should be no change to the current guidance (August 2019) on screening for vision defects in reception age children.
- 3.3 The current recommendation is that screening for visual impairment through the Child Vision Screening Programme should be organised and led by an orthoptic-led service. In the event of new national guidance, the specification would be reviewed accordingly.
- 3.4 The Public Health Outcomes Framework<sup>2</sup> for England sets out the government's priorities for public health. It includes an indicator to highlight the rate of preventable sight loss in the population.
- 3.5 Although serious vision problems during childhood are rare, routine eye checks are offered to newborn babies and young children to identify any problems early on. Free NHS sight tests are also available at opticians for children under 16 and for young people under 19 in full-time education.

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<sup>1</sup> [Recommendations - UK National Screening Committee \(UK NSC\) - GOV.UK \(view-health-screening-recommendations.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-health-outcomes-framework>

- 3.6 Vision screening is usually carried out in a child's school, however, if a child's vision is not checked at school, families are directed take them to a local optician for an eye examination.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.7 The Vision Screening Programme for children aged 4 to 5 years is primarily undertaken to detect children with amblyopia, a form of abnormal vision system development. The most common predisposing conditions are strabismus (squint) and refractive error (focusing problems requiring glasses). Early detection of amblyopia is necessary to avoid permanent visual impairment by allowing treatment to be undertaken within the sensitive period of neuroplasticity (growth and change) in the visual system.
- 3.8 The objectives of the child vision screening programme are to:
- identify the eligible population and ensure fair access for all children;
  - offer parents/carers the opportunity to have their children screened for reduced vision and provide information so an informed choice whether to accept the offer can be made;
  - ensure competent staff deliver the programme; and
  - deliver a safe, effective service supported by regular and accurate data collection and audit.
- 3.9 There are two Health Outcomes for the Child Vision Screening Programme:
1. Direct Health Outcome - the optimal development of vision for children with amblyopia through prompt access to treatment;
  2. Indirect Health Outcome - is the optimal personal, health, social and educational development for all children with reduced vision in one or both eyes.

#### **4. Current Position**

- 4.1 For the past 19 years Orthoptists from Sunderland Eye Infirmary have been carrying out vision screening for children in reception class across schools in Sunderland. The current service model is in line with the national specification.
- 4.2 The current provider of the contract is South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust. The current annual contract value is £116,379.
- 4.3 Based on the current contract price, the estimated overall contract price for the proposed new contract, including the optional extension (i.e. 5 years plus an optional extension of up to 24 months), would be approximately £815,000. However, the final contract price will be determined through the new procurement process.
- 4.3 The costs will be met from the Public Health revenue budget utilising the funding provided in the annual Public Health Grant allocation.

#### **5. Reasons for Decision**

- 5.1 The proposal to implement the commissioning intention would ensure the continuation of a Child Vision Screening Programme for children aged 4 to 5 years in Sunderland which meets current and future needs, in accordance with the

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<sup>3</sup> [vision screening for 4 to 5 year olds parent information](#)

recommendations of the UK National Screening Committee (NSC). This will support the continued delivery of key health outcomes for children in Sunderland..

## 6. **Alternative Options**

The following option was also considered and rejected:

Do nothing – do not procure and award a new contract for Child Vision Screening. This is not a viable option as children aged 4 to 5 years in Sunderland would not have access to a universal child vision screening programme, which is within scope of the public health functions for children’s public health.

## 7. **Impact Analysis**

### **Introduction**

Public Health services and interventions aim to improve public health outcomes and reduce inequalities by preventing ill health and providing accessible and targeted interventions to those with an identified need or those most likely to experience poor health outcomes. Impacts are analysed below.

- (a) **Equalities** – A full integrated impact assessment on the proposals has been completed. A copy of the assessment is attached for Cabinet’s information. In summary, there are no negative impacts associated with the proposals.
- (b) **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)** – There are no identified implications in relation to privacy associated with this proposal. There is clear guidance issued by the Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities (formerly Public Health England), which clarifies the lawful basis for obtaining information for vision screening, including a template letter for primary schools.
- (c) **Sustainability** – There are no identified implications in relation to sustainability associated with this proposal.
- (d) **Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion** – There are no identified implications in relation to reduction of crime and disorder associated with this proposal.

## 8. **Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

- (i) **Co-operative Values** – The public health service described here furthers the Co-operative values through offering the intervention universally to the target population, with the aim of reducing health inequalities.
- (ii) **Financial Implications** – The costs will be met from the Public Health revenue budget utilising the funding provided in the annual Public Health Grant allocation.
- (iii) **Legal Implications** – The procurement process for the proposed new contract will be carried out in accordance with the relevant requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council’s Procurement Procedure Rules.

- (iv) **Policy Implications** – Implementation aims to support the shared values within the Sunderland Healthy City Plan, focusing on prevention, tackling health inequalities and equity.
- (i) **Procurement** – All work in respect of the proposed procurement and award of the contract will be undertaken in consultation with Corporate Procurement.

## 10. List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Integrated Impact Assessment