

Tees Valley Public Health Shared Service (TVPHSS)  
Redheugh House  
Thornaby Place  
Thornaby  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS17 6SG

Tel: (01642) 745183

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Dear Joanne

**Healthwatch Public Engagement Summary - Sexual Health Services**

Thank you for sharing the summary report on your recent public engagement within Stockton-on-Tees with regard to sexual health services together with your recommendations.

Overall, the summary report mirrors the findings from both the recent Teeswide public and stakeholder consultation undertaken by NWA Social and Market Research Ltd and from current service user patient satisfaction scores with regards to levels of general satisfaction of the service and the professionalism and support received from the staff.

Section 5 – (Findings).

**Awareness of services**

This section focuses on the inconsistency in the information provision of sexual health services from schools in Stockton-on-Tees, especially faith schools. However, as the report states, this is not within the remit of the sexual health service to deliver.

The report mentions that asylum seekers receive a great deal of information from their first appointment with a GP practice which would be the Arrival Practice in Stockton which sees all newly registered asylum seekers who are offered HIV, Hep B and Hep C testing and have a full STI screen and smear test where appropriate and given contraception and sexual health advice within 2 weeks of registering at the practice.

**Access to services**

If Healthwatch can share with the commissioner more detailed information, for example, where one young person told Healthwatch that she “had to take the morning off college to get the injection as they only do it on a Friday morning” we will investigate this with the provider to gain a better understanding of any potential capacity issues.

### Opening times

Suggestions made from people regarding opening times for the service show a lack of awareness in those questioned which is a concern.

- 'To be open until 6pm' - The hub at Lawson Street Health Centre for example is open from 8am-6pm 4 days a week and 8am-8pm one day week.
- 'Services available outside of working and college hours' - The spoke clinics at Thornaby and Billingham have evening clinics from 6pm-9pm.
- 'Able to access sexual health services at a pharmacist' - There are 37 pharmacies in Stockton-on-Tees, 35 of which are sub-contracted by the current sexual health provider to offer sexual health services.
- 'People asking for a service in Eaglescliffe and Yarm' are unaware that there are 2 GP practices and 2 pharmacies in Eaglescliffe and 2 GP practices and 4 pharmacies in Yarm which are sub-contracted by the current sexual health provider to offer sexual health services.

An opportunity does appear to have been missed to inform those young people unaware of the range of services, their locations and opening times of the service whilst carrying out this engagement exercise.

However, where feedback received from '...young people in particular, stating that they felt more comfortable being given sexual health advice by a clinician such as a GP, nurse or pharmacist', this supports the current delivery model. The service is predominately a nurse led service which subcontracts GP practices and community pharmacies to deliver sexual health services.

### Culturally appropriate awareness

The comments made regarding the current provider of the rapid access to HIV testing who is subcontracted by the sexual health service, 'Some people told us that they found access problematic due to cultural sensitivity' will be fed back to the sexual health provider but there will be an expectation that the service will ask for more evidence to back up this statement.

The 4 recommendations below which are highlighted within the Healthwatch summary report, are key priorities for future service provision and will be included within the service specification that will form part of a suite of documents that will go out to tender for a new service.

1. Explore current delivery of HIV screening for the African asylum seeker and refugee community to ensure a range of delivery locations and methods are offered in order to promote uptake of screening within this group.
2. Ensure awareness of services via a variety of methods to ensure effective communication with people from all backgrounds.
3. Ensure ease of access to services is considered.
4. The service provider to communicate with communities in a culturally appropriate fashion.

As part of the sexual health service re-procurement the TVPHSS will be expecting potential bidders to demonstrate and evidence how they will reach into those communities that are traditionally more difficult to engage with and work with and we will be looking for the new provider to demonstrate innovative ways of communicating services.

Currently, the TVPHSS are working with the current provider to develop and improve their website to make it more user-friendly and ultimately more effective. We will also be expecting the new service provider to fully resource the marketing and promotion of sexual health services across Teesside using an appropriate mix of communication and advertising methods.

We are keen to address the issue of access to services and are aware of the current lack of outreach provision within Stockton-on-Tees which will be addressed within the service specification for the new service. We will also ensure that outreach provision is located in the most appropriate locations to make access to services easier and will be using feedback from the recent Teeswide consultation as well as current utilisation data available to help inform that decision.

In addition, we will be including within the service specification, an expectation that the new service provider will work with schools to support the Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) offer.

Regarding some of the specific concerns documented within the report, for example, concerns accessing chlamydia screening due to feeling embarrassed because people can see what you are doing when at college, I shall pick this up directly with the service provider and explore opportunities to address potential privacy issues.

We will be happy to keep you informed of any outcomes following discussions with the service provider on the issues raised within the summary report.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JA Booth".

Jacky Booth  
Public Health Contracts Manager  
Tees Valley Public Health Shared Service  
(Working on behalf of Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar &  
Cleveland, Darlington Local Authorities)