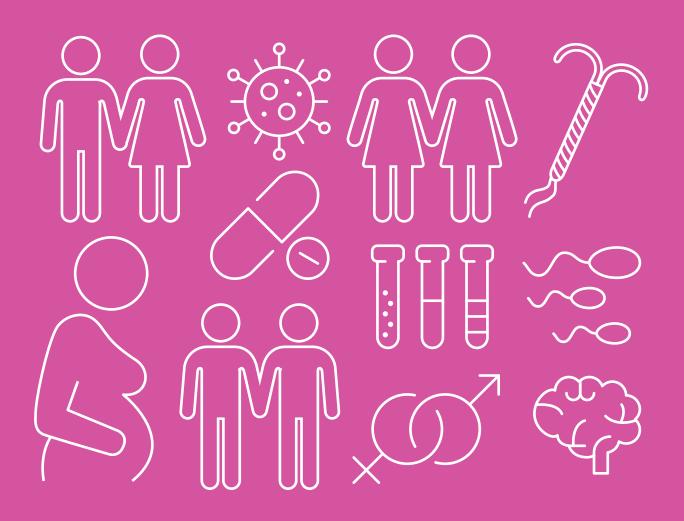
# SEXUAL AND<br/>REPRODUCTIVE<br/>HEALTH STRADLATION2023-2030







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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# Reducing sexual and reproductive health inequalities is our priority

This 2023-2030 Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy sets out Birmingham City Council's (BCC) and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's (SMBC) themes, priorities and approach to meeting the sexual health needs of Birmingham and Solihull. It sets out plans to respond to increasing rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV and improve the reproductive health of our citizens. Sexual Health can impact an individual's emotional, physical and mental health, their economic means and social relationships. The effects of poor sexual and reproductive health are far reaching and for those affected, the impacts are compounded by social stigma and fear.

This strategy and associated action plan recognise that sexual health and wellbeing impact on and are affected by wider determinants of health (such as social, economic and environmental issues, which shape daily life and affect people's health), and so partnership working with all relevant organisations nationally, regionally and locally is crucial. This will also ensure that the right actions are carried out for the right people, in the right place and at the right time.

With challenges around reductions in public funding, it is vital that clear priorities focus on reducing sexual health inequalities and provide accessible services to all.

A strong evidence-base has informed this Strategy to tailor its approach to address the needs of Birmingham and Solihull's population through the following five themes:

Theme One: Priority groups Theme Two: Reducing the rates of sexually transmitted infections Theme Three: Reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies Theme Four: Building resilience Theme Five: Children and young people A key enabler that runs through all five themes is the use of innovation and technology.

Through the themes and priorities, this strategy stands to have the greatest impact on those health inequalities and vulnerabilities at all ages and aims to improve the sexual health of the entire population.

Prevention is a priority and although this strategy focuses on a universal approach, there must be targeted interventions for certain groups such as under 25s, men who have sex with men (MSM) and minority ethnic groups who are disproportionately affected.

This strategy is supported by and reflects our local Sexual Health Needs Assessment (SHNA), which is a live document and responds to the variable landscape and needs of our population and sits alongside the development of the Integrated Care System (ICS).

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy works towards integrating all priorities in order to address the wider determinants of good sexual and reproductive health.

This strategy was developed by Birmingham and Solihull Council's Public Health and Commissioning Teams. Interested members of the public and stakeholders have been invited to give their views on the strategy, and those views have been incorporated.

A final version of the strategy will be published after approval by Cabinet Members and the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Clear aims and objectives are vital in reducing sexual health inequalities

# FOREWORD



Paulette Hamilton

#### Councillor Paulette Hamilton

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Birmingham City Council



**Councillor Dicicco** ??, Solihull Metropolitan

**Borough Council** 

#### As Cabinet Members in Birmingham and Solihull, we support this Joint Birmingham and Solihull Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy.

Sexual and Reproductive health is a fundamental part of our lives. Supporting a healthy approach is important at every age and our approach should be holistic and value the diversity of relationships, not just focus on procreation and sexually transmitted diseases. This new strategy embodies the World Health Organisation's recommendation to take a holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health across the life course for the citizens of Birmingham and Solihull.

This strategy recognises that there are areas of excellence being delivered in partnership with communities and clinicians across Birmingham and Solihull, however there is still potential to be even better. This strategy has achievable aspirations to respond to the rates of sexually transmitted infections and Blood Borne Viruses, improving reproductive health outcomes including prevention of unwanted pregnancies and ensuring that all citizens of Birmingham are provided with timely information and advice.

We also recognise that the recovery from the pandemic will bring additional challenges, however, we will work closely with partners and people living, working and studying in Birmingham and Solihull to ensure that the aims of this strategy are successfully met and we support all of our citizens to achieve their potential for healthy sexual and reproductive health.

## **CONTEXT & PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

#### 1.1 Why a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy is important for Birmingham and Solihull

This strategy sets out Birmingham and Solihull's vision, ambitions and priorities for sexual and reproductive health services over the next seven years, and provides a framework to guide the planning, commissioning and delivery of sexual and reproductive health services to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for Birmingham and Solihull citizens across the life course.

The provision of sexual health services is statutory and local authorities are mandated to commission open access sexual health services, including free STI testing and treatment, partner notification of infected persons, advice on and reasonable access to a broad range of contraceptives and preventing unplanned pregnancy.

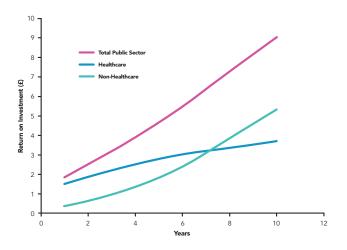
Our strategy is built on the most up to date intelligence and information we have on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), sets out several themed areas for priority from 2023 to 2030 and the actions we will take to address these priorities.

We recognise that the National Sexual Health Strategy is due to be released by the Department of Health and Social Care post December 2021, however, our strategy is designed to complement the expected release and will be flexible to meet any additional requirements.

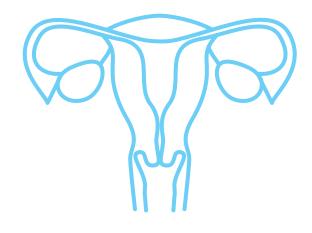
This strategy is complementary and embracing of other local policies and strategies, such as Domestic Abuse, Substance Use, Education, Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE), HIV, Women's Health and so on.

#### **1.2 Investing in Sexual Health Services**

Investing in sexual health services has demonstrated value for money and a substantial return on investment. A national study has shown that every £1 spent on contraceptive services saves £9 across the public sector1. The data also shows that 52% and 12% of unplanned pregnancies end in abortion and miscarriage respectively2. Collectively, this can provide a cost saving per averted pregnancy of £23.91 over 10 years, which translates to £3.68 healthcare saving per £1 invested and £5.32 non-healthcare saving per £1 invested over a 10-year period<sup>3</sup>.



The SHNA<sup>4</sup> has identified key areas to continue and enhance investment, namely training of staff and the future workforce. Education and early intervention investment are also important, which will help further achieve the return on investment for Birmingham and Solihull on sexual and reproductive health services.

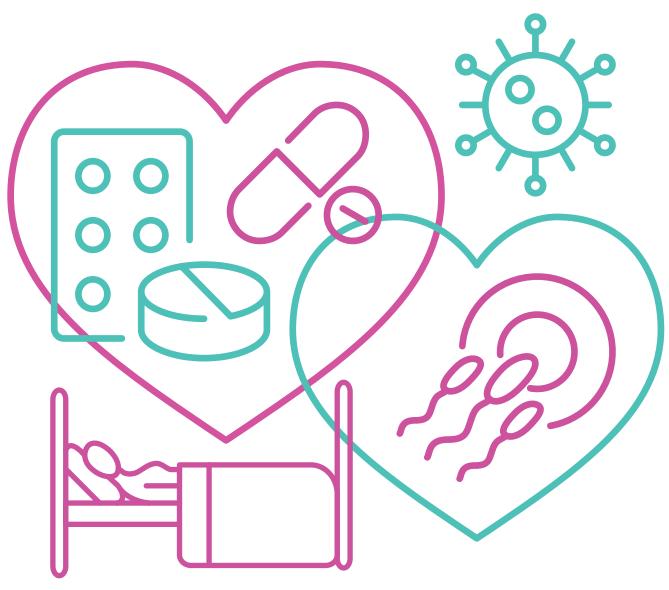


#### 1.3 Why We Need a Joint Strategy

Birmingham and Solihull face some of the greatest sexual health challenges nationally, including high rates of HIV, STIs, emergency contraception use and abortions<sup>4</sup>.

Although Birmingham has a younger population than Solihull, the challenges are similar, and due to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)/ ICS footprint crossing borders, the approach to have a joint strategy is to match the local NHS footprint.

As the challenges we face are similar, Birmingham and Solihull are in a stronger position to meet the needs of our populations through collaborating on Sexual Health Commissioning and this strategy. This approach allows us to pool both human and financial resources to avoid duplication in service delivery and financial overlap, saving each area both time and money. However, certain elements of service delivery are tailored to be able to meet the differing requirements of each geographical area. To underpin our collaboration, we need a clear strategic vision with a clear action plan, which this strategy will provide.



# THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

## 2.1 The Local and National Evidence Base

Birmingham's population is one of the youngest and most deprived in England<sup>3</sup>.

Proportionally, Solihull has an above average population of people aged 65 and over. The borough is considered a relatively affluent area, but does have pockets of deprivation where 16% of the population live<sup>4</sup>.

vears



is the median age in **Birmingham** 

vears is the median age in **Solihull** 

The proportion of total prescribed LARCs (excluding injections) per 1,000 is lower in Birmingham (26.5) and Solihull (28.9), compared to nationally  $(34.6)^4$ .



LARCs were prescribed in **Birmingham** 



LARCs were prescribed in Solihul

The proportion of repeat abortions in under 25s is higher in Birmingham and Solihull, compared to England's average (29.2%)<sup>4</sup>.

of abortions in<25s in **Birmingham** were repeat abortions



repeat abortions

There were 485 new STI diagnoses (excluding chlamydia) per 100,000 of those aged under 25 in Birmingham, and 269 per 100,000 in Solihull, both lower than the national rate of 619<sup>4</sup>.

per 1,000 people aged 15-59 were diagnosed with HIV in **Birmingham** 

people aged 15-59 were diagnosed with HIV in Solihull

per

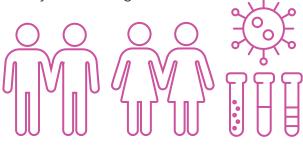
1.000

The impact of COVID-19 meant that more sexual health interventions were conducted online and over the phone. Only one walk-in clinic was available during the peak of the pandemic across both local authorities<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2 Current Service Provision and Planning for the Future

#### What works well?

Access to free condoms, contraceptive advice, general sexual health information, HIV advice, identifying and supporting abuse victims/ survivors of rape and sexual violence, support for patients who identify as LGBTQ, access to chlamydia screening/treatment.



#### What could be better?

Vasectomies, sterilisation, delays in LARC appointments, complex contraception services, emergency coil fittings, information for gender dysphoria, information for PEPSE and PrEP, services for homeless, refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived migrants, rapid testing for STIs, community-based testing.

The 2021 SHNA consulted members of the public and key stakeholders about current service provision and future needs.





#### 2.4 Birmingham Specific Areas of Focus

Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF)<sup>5</sup> and locally agreed outcomes:

- Increasing the use of good quality contraception to reduce under-18 conceptions and abortions for all ages (PHOF Indicator)
- Reducing late diagnosis and transmission of BBVs and STIs to prevent reinfection by ensuring prompt access for earlier diagnosis and treatment (PHOF Indicator)
- Providing better access to services for highrisk priority groups
- Improved support for people vulnerable to, and victims of, sexual coercion, sexual violence and exploitation
- Increasing the chlamydia diagnostic rate in the 15–24 age group (PHOF Indicator).

#### **2.5 Solihull Specific Areas of Focus**

As per Birmingham, with the following additions:

- Increasing the chlamydia diagnostic rate in the 15–24 age group (PHOF Indicator)
- with a focus on embedding opportunistic testing for 15–24-year-old females
- Improve access and take up of long-acting reversible (LARC) contraception
- Develop access to EHC across the borough to provide equitable access
- Improve sexual health education as part of prevention.

## **OUR VISION**

## 3.1 A Joint Vision for Birmingham and Solihull

A key vision of this strategy is to address the joint common themes identified by the SHNA for Birmingham and Solihull. This strategy will provide a tool to enable appropriate action and enhance existing pathways to meet the needs of citizens.

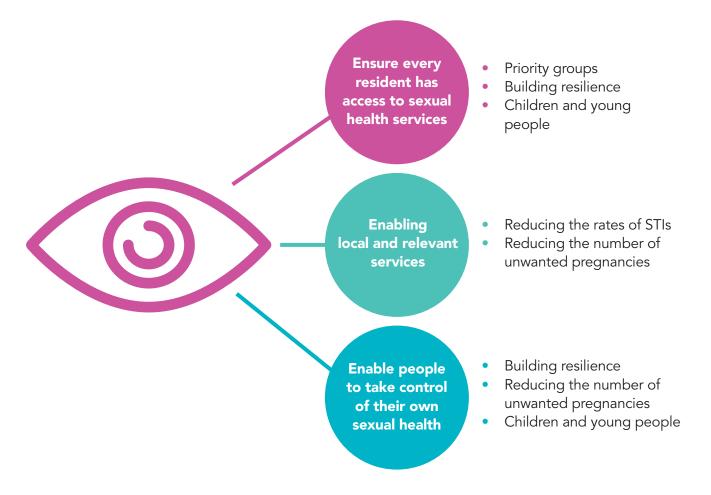
The key objectives of this strategy are to:

- Ensure that every resident has access to sexual health services that meet their individual needs.
- Enable services that are local, relevant, approachable, confidential, non-judgemental, to provide services to anyone in need, while respecting all human protected characteristics.
- Enable citizens to have control of their own sexual health with services providing support where needed.

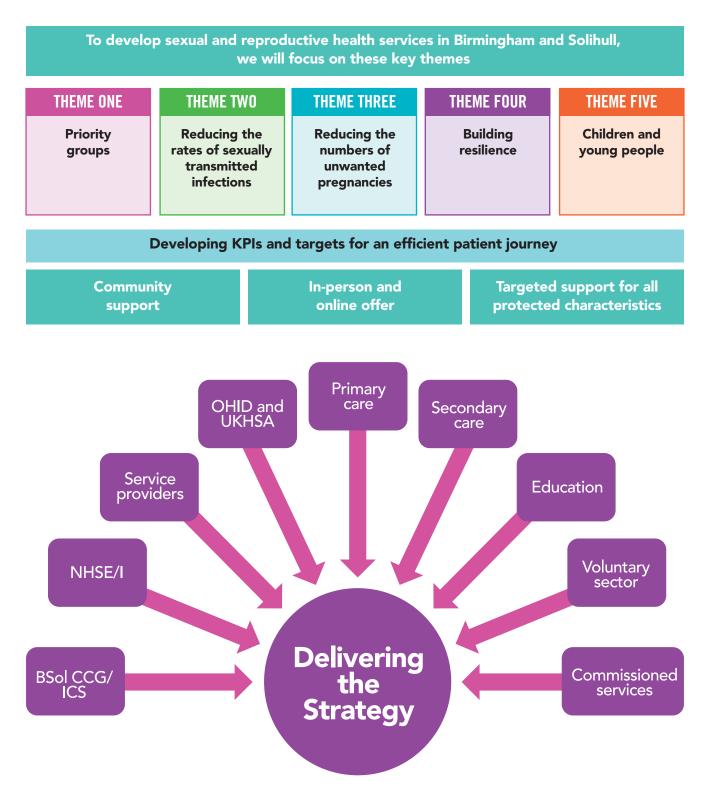
This strategy will play a key role in realising the joint vision for sexual health services for the future, and will facilitate:

- A fully integrated, free and confidential sexual health service for all citizens across the life course
- A reduction in the high rates of teenage and unwanted pregnancy, abortion and STIs, which can have far reaching consequences for individuals and society
- Open and equitable access to sexual health services, in line with the Equality Act<sup>6</sup>.

A key outcome of this strategy will be to equip the citizens of Birmingham and Solihull to have good reproductive health and healthy sexual relationships, positively impacting the wider emotional, mental and physical health and wellbeing of citizens.



#### 3.2 Realising Our Joint Vision



# THEME ONE Priority Groups

#### Why is it a theme?

**Low rates of attendance** to sexual health screens in Birmingham and Solihull for those from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.



**Substance users'** lifestyles make them more vulnerable to **poor sexual health** (including increased risk of HIV) and unwanted pregnancies



# **29.2**%

of **gay men living with** HIV reported having had Chemsex in the last year<sup>4</sup>



#### **Digital Divide**

Citizens living with disabilities and those without access to technology are more likely to be digitally excluded, making accessing services harder, especially during the pandemic



A high proportion of **MSM** not accessing testing despite disclosing condomless sex with multiple partners<sup>7</sup>



Homeless people are less able to access services due to rigid timings and conditions

## National and Local Evidence

Our needs assessment identified the following priority groups:



Establishing focus groups	8	$\otimes$
and user involvement for those hardest to reach		
those hardest to reach	A	

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Continued training packages for GPs, sexual health practitioners & partners to include information on gender dysphoria and LGBTQ

help break barriers

Link nurses between homeless

and substance use services to



Co-delivery between drug and alcohol services and sexual health services as recommended by the HIV commission<sup>®</sup>

Explore the provision of sexual health services in existing homeless hubs

To recognise the intersectional nature of priority groups & provide support according to individual needs

Work with disability services to ensure:

- 1. Information on sexual health is accessible and understandable
- 2. Those working with and for people with disabilities, have the confidence and tools to raise sexual health issues
- 3. Locations of sexual health services are accessible

## **Aims and Outcomes**



# **THEME TWO** Reducing the Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections

#### Why is it a theme?

**Chlamydia** can lead to long-term complications including infertility<sup>°</sup> STIs, like chlamydia, are sometimes **asymptomatic** so may be **unnoticed** by individuals and passed on

A significant number of people are **diagnosed at a late stage** of infection which means that they may have had HIV for some time and may be very unwell as a result of **damage to their immune system**<sup>°</sup>

STIs are associated with inequalities and deprivation

In Birmingham there has been a significant increase in the number of **gonorrhoea diagnoses** & there are strains that are **resistant** to treatment<sup>4</sup>



## National and Local Evidence

**Chlamydia** accounts for the majority of new **STI diagnoses** 

**57% & 56%** of diagnoses from **GUM** and **non-GUM** services in Birmingham and Solihull, respectively, were of chlamydia<sup>4</sup>



Most **outreach services** were stopped during COVID-19

**Engagement** feedback revealed that the current sexual health provider website is not user friendly and that patients had to call to find about pharmacy availability

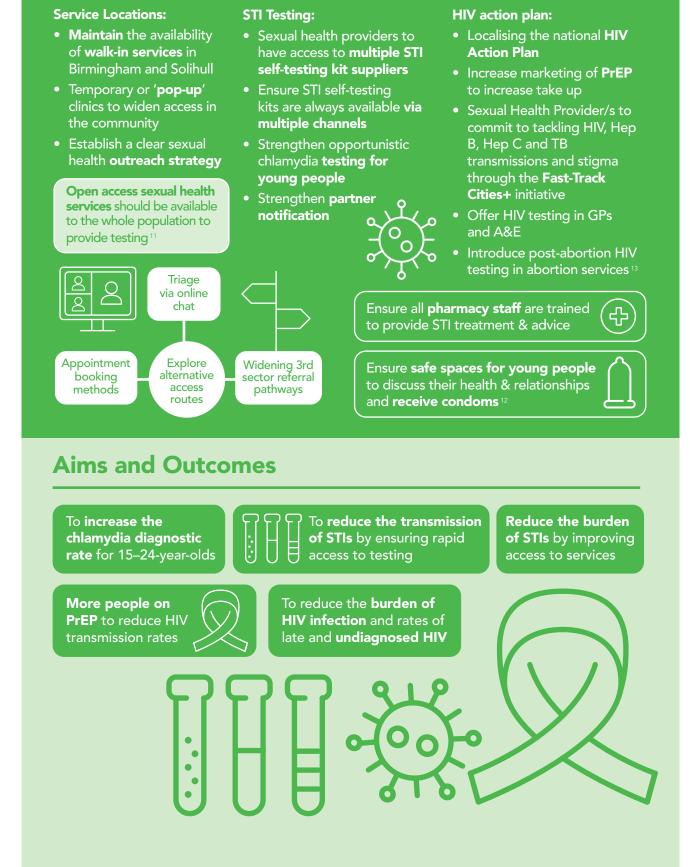


In Solihull there are 2 sexual health clinic locations – provision in the north had to be relocated and only recently been made available



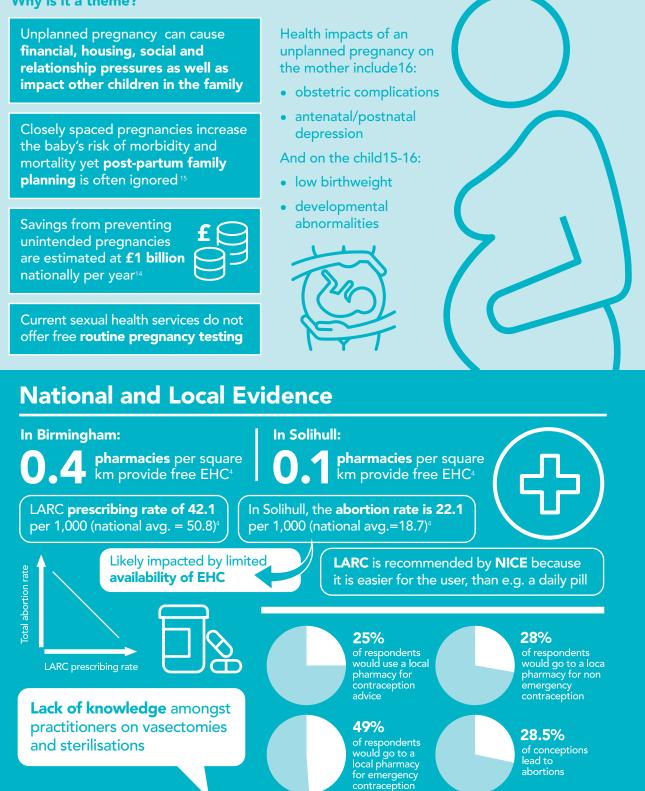
During the **COVID-19** pandemic, calls were triaged so that those who needed to be seen could pre-book for appointments, including at a walk-in clinic in Birmingham A **73 year-old woman**, recently asked for condoms at a London Family Planning Clinic. The nurse replied, "You don't need condoms, you won't get pregnant, you're too old."

**STI** rates are **increasing** in the 50-70 year old age group<sup>4</sup>



# **THEME THREE Reduce the Number of Unwanted Pregnancies**

Why is it a theme?



The sexual health provider and other partners to provide free pregnancy tests where appropriate, in several settings

Work with stakeholders to plan post-natal contraception pathways

Develop culturally Increase access to LARC in Birmingham including exploring the possibility of expanding contraceptive services subdermal implants into pharmacies

**Increase** availability and prescribed rates of **LARC** and EHC in Solihull

competent

Abortion services to provide access to LARC together with appropriate contraceptive and sexual health advice

Pharmacies in Solihull to deliver the same contraceptive services as those in Birmingham

## **Aims and Outcomes**

Continue to minimise unplanned pregnancies

Highly visible, accessible and comprehensive contraceptive services including services for young people

Regularly review the quality

of information on contraception

To empower women to make informed choices about their reproductive health by providing good quality information and advice on contraception

To ensure that women can **access** the full range of contraception

To improve post-partum family planning

To reduce repeat abortions

# THEME FOUR Building Resilience



## National and Local Evidence

There is **stigma and insensitivity** relating to HIV, STIs, sex and relationships in Black African, Latin American and South Asian communities<sup>18</sup> and adults aged 50+ years

Adults over 50 face a misconception that they do not need condoms, information on sexual health, or even consent. This is **perpetuated by peers & professionals** alike

"A client used to be able to collect condoms from clinics, now asked to go queue at pharmacies, which young patients find embarrassing." - Young Person's Counsellor The main barriers Birmingham's population face in accessing sexual health services are<sup>4</sup>:

- Embarrassment & shame
- Lack of knowledge of sexual health
- People do not believe they can
  catch an STI

There are misconceptions and stigma surrounding **disabled people and sex Drugs** may be used to cope with the **emotional distress** following a sexual health problem and related stigma<sup>19</sup>

As part of Fast-Track Cities+, a **stigma reducing campaign** will be developed

To provide targeted engagement and support programmes for those affected by sexual and/or domestic abuse



**Challenging stigma and discrimination** by addressing misconceptions, busting myths, normalising good sexual health, providing advocacy and empowering communities

Develop voluntary **community sexual health champions** in communities where there is traditionally poor engagement **To ensure all have accurate information** to develop healthy, safe and consensual sexual relationships



**Break down barriers for older adults** by training healthcare professionals on having conversations about sexual health with people aged 50+

Addressing peer pressure and social norms though consistent messages, information and education

To promote and support **evidence** -based resilience programmes in schools

## **Aims and Outcomes**

To have a **positive sexual health culture** that is accepted as part of human behaviour

To **work across sectors** to ensure consistent messaging and stigma-reduction



Provide **information** that is **accessible** and **acceptable for all**, regardless of whether it is spoken or written information



For **information** and **services** relating to sexual and reproductive health to always be informed by the latest evidence

To **enable citizens to access services** confidently and confidentially, and without fear of stigma or judgement

# THEME FIVE Children and Young People

#### Why is it a theme?

Young people under 25 are the age group most affected by STIs<sup>11</sup>

In Birmingham: **17.9** Under 18s conception rate per 1,000

In Solihull: **13.6** Under 18s conception rate per 1,000 (England avg. = 15.7 per 1,000)<sup>4</sup> Women in their early twenties are most likely to have an **unplanned pregnancy** and most likely to access abortion services<sup>16</sup>

Sexual health and sexual experiences as a child and young person can impact their sexual health and mental health in the future

Young people want more information on sexual health<sup>20</sup>



## National and Local Evidence

**0%** In Birmingham and Solihull, teenage pregnancies have decreased by approximately 60% from 2009 to 2019<sup>4</sup>

In Solihull **69% of conceptions** in those aged under 18 led to an abortion – this reflects an increase in abortions<sup>4</sup>

In Birmingham **48% of** conceptions in those aged under 18 led to an abortion<sup>4</sup>



) The under 18 birth rate in Birmingham is **5.6** per 1,000 ) (England avg. = 4.1)<sup>4</sup>

CLINIC

Whilst there is a **Young Person's abuse survivors' clinic**, there is no specific child sexual abuse survivors' clinic in Birmingham or Solihull

20

Designing a **specific integrated service pathway** for Under 13s

Provide access to appropriate and effective contraceptives, including LARC

Increase provision of **good quality advice and information** for children, young people, parents & carers

To support schools & colleges to provide **high quality RSE** 

Incorporate Sexual Health Wellness assessments as part of **social care health check** for CYP entering care

High risk groups:

- Ensure support is available for young NEETs and young people in high need groups
- To set up a well-promoted childspecific sexual abuse survivors' clinic
- Prioritise **children in need** and **care leavers** up to age 25 years

Rollout of the **Bystander Intervention** programme to all higher education settings to support healthy relationships in young adults



## **Aims and Outcomes**

Equip young people with the **knowledge** they need to make **healthy sexual choices** 

For **schools** and **other settings** children are in, to promote healthy and positive sexual relationships



Ensure all **young people** and children know **where** they can go and **who** they can **talk to confidentially** about sexual health and related issues

الح حرا

To **reduce under-18** conceptions and abortions

Targeted, acceptable services for CYP most in need

# GOVERNANCE

#### Joint Local Authority Meetings

Birmingham and Solihull service leads and commissioners will work closely to ensure the joint successful delivery of this strategy. This group will be responsible for the performance management of services and actively working with the appointed service provider/s to ensure efficient and effective service delivery and to ensure Sexual Health Services are equitable and providing equality of service to citizens.

### **Commissioning & Contracts Board**

The Commissioning & Contracts Board will consist of Commissioners from both Birmingham and Solihull, including key delivery partners. This Board will review on a regular basis the commissioning intentions, contract performance, changes in services required and implementation of any variations to the contract.

The Commissioning & Contracts Board will have overall autonomy on successful delivery of this strategy and outcomes along with the financial responsibility to ensure the service is equitable, accessible and delivering value for money.

## Health and Wellbeing Boards

The Sexual Health Service will be accountable to each local authority's Health and Wellbeing Board. The Health and Wellbeing Boards will receive an annual (or upon request) update on performance against the strategic actions outlined in this strategy.

The Health and Wellbeing Boards will have responsibility of reviewing the services delivered against the evidence base, and including this within, the wider health and wellbeing considerations for the local populations.

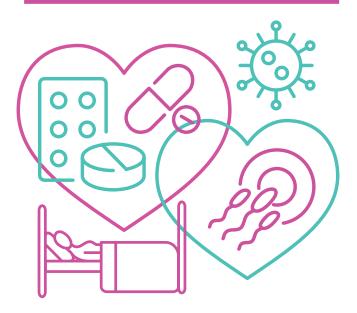
## **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

The progress on service delivery is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually, where the following will be presented:

- Review of services and their delivery, including the service model and accessibility
- Evidence review and policy change
- Partnership arrangements
- Performance and outcomes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings can be attended by the public where there is an opportunity to discuss certain elements of service delivery i.e. what is working well, what is not, challenges and triumphs.

## Good governance is the key to successful outcomes



# GLOSSARY

BBV	Blood Borne Virus
всс	Birmingham City Council
BHIVA	British HIV Association
Bsol	Birmingham and Solihull
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
СҮР	Children and Young People
DH	Department of Health
EHC	Emergency Hormonal Contraception
GP	General Practice/Practitioner
GUM	Genito-Urinary Medicine
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICS	Integrated Care System
LA	Local Authority
LARC	Long Acting Reversible Contraception
LD	Learning Disabilities
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NEET	Not in Education, Employment and Training

NHS	National Health Service
NHSE/I	NHS England and Improvement
NICE	National Institute of Clinical Excellence
OHID	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
PEPSE	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis following Sexual Exposure
PHE	Public Health England
PHOF	Public Health Outcomes Framework
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
RSE	Relationships and Sexual Education
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centres
SHNA	Sexual Health Needs Assessment
SMBC	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UKHSA	UK Health Security Agency

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