

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Health & Wellbeing Board  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
**Report for:** Information/Decision  
**Report of:** Director of Public Health

### Report Title

Sexual Health in Trafford: Progress, Barriers, and Future Enablers

### Purpose

To update Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board on the progress regarding sexual health in Trafford, the current issues and barriers, and future enablers/priorities.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board members:

1. Acknowledge the impact and interrelation between sexual health and Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board responsibilities and priorities, noting the importance of good sexual health in improving the lives of Trafford residents and reducing health inequalities.
2. Acknowledge the current barriers and challenges in sexual health (in section 4) across Trafford and their wider impact on the health and wellbeing of Trafford residents.
3. Support Trafford Council's Public Health team in ensuring maximum awareness of STIs and Trafford's sexual health services among residents.
4. Advocating for addressing the sexual health needs of Trafford residents through innovative joint working across the health and social care system and with health-related services.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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### Background Papers:

Trafford Sexual Health Needs Assessment, 2024  
Trafford Sexual Health Action Plan, 2024-27

# Sexual Health in Trafford: Progress, Barriers, and Future Enablers

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Sexual Health and Wellbeing

1.1.1 According to the current working definition, sexual health is:

“...a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.” ([WHO, 2006](#))

1.1.2 Sexual health is relevant throughout the individual’s lifespan, not only to those in the reproductive years, but also in adolescents and older adults.

1.1.3 Sexual health is fundamental to the overall health and well-being of individuals, couples and families, and to the social and economic development of communities and countries. Poor sexual health can have many negative consequences on individuals, such as:

- Infections with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and reproductive tract infections (RTIs)
- Adverse outcomes such as cancer, infertility, stillbirths, ectopic pregnancies, depression, pelvic inflammatory disease, cardiovascular disease and neurological issues
- Unintended pregnancy and abortions
- Sexual dysfunction

## 1.2 Sexual Health Data

### 1.2.1 National Sexual Health Data

1.2.1.1 In 2023, there were 401,800 diagnoses of new STIs in England, an increase of 4.7% from 2022 (383,789). Gonorrhoea diagnoses rose by 7.5% to 85,223, the highest annual number reported since records began in 1918; while infectious syphilis by 9.4% to 9,513, the highest annual number reported since 1948. First episode genital herpes diagnoses rose by 8.8% between 2022 and 2023 but remained 21.2% lower than 2019; there was also an increase in the rate of mycoplasma genitalium diagnoses by 23.2% between 2022 and 2023. The rates of first episode genital warts and chlamydia remained stable between 2022 to 2023, the

recent decline in genital warts can be attributed to direct or indirect protection by the quadrivalent HPV vaccine.

- 1.2.1.2 Between 2022 and 2023, there was a 2.1% decrease in chlamydia testing and a 4.2% decrease in chlamydia diagnoses in young women aged 15-24 years through the National Chlamydia Screening Programme; the percentage of positive chlamydia tests remained stable at 9.6%.
- 1.2.1.3 STIs continue to be most prevalent in young people aged 15-24 years, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), and certain ethnically diverse communities. 21.5% of diagnoses of new STIs in 2023, were among people of Asian, black or mixed ethnicity. People from Black ethnic communities had the highest rates of all ethnicities, this can largely be attributed to the social and structural determinants of health and younger age demographic.

## 1.2.2 Trafford Sexual Health Data

- 1.2.2.1 Overall, Trafford is below the national average for new STI diagnoses but areas of Trafford such as Bucklow-St Martins and Clifford have rates of diagnosis above the national average. Trafford's STI rates generally follow national trends and have seen increases post pandemic.
- 1.2.2.2 **Chlamydia:** Trafford has a low chlamydia detection rate, the second worst in Greater Manchester and worse than the national average and outcome targets. The current rate is 19% worse compared to 2022 and 36% worse than 2019. There is a clear correlation between areas of high deprivation in Trafford and poor chlamydia detection rates. Trafford also has a lower chlamydia screening rate for females aged 15 to 24 compared to the national and GM average.
- 1.2.2.3 **Gonorrhoea:** Gonorrhoea rates continue to increase in Trafford since 2012 in line with the national trend. Trafford's diagnostic rate for gonorrhoea is slightly better than the national and GM average. From January 2014 to December 2023, the gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) population made up 65% of the total gonorrhoea diagnoses. This disproportionately high rate could be an indicator of risky sexual behaviour.
- 1.2.2.4 **Syphilis:** Trafford's syphilis rates are similar to the national average and have been since 2012. However, infectious syphilis rates are increasing, particularly in the heterosexual population with observed rises in congenital syphilis. Between January 2014 and December 2023, the majority of syphilis diagnoses were in men (89%) and specifically GBMSM populations (69.2%). Between Q1 of 2019 to Q3 of 2023, 25% of patients diagnosed with infectious syphilis were living with HIV and half of those diagnosed were in the two most deprived population quintiles. Trafford's syphilis testing coverage in 2022 was also the highest out of all local authorities in GM.

- 1.2.2.5 **HIV:** HIV prevalence in Trafford is lower than the national average and testing prevalence is higher than the national average, with higher testing in the North of the borough in line with the greater concentration of populations at greatest risk of HIV. However, the repeat HIV testing rate in the GBMSM population is worse than the national average and lowest in GM. Trafford also has an above average late diagnosis rate for heterosexual men only. In previous years it was high for all groups but this has reduced from 2018.
- 1.2.2.6 **Genital Warts:** The genital wart diagnosis rate in Trafford is lower than the national average and has been on a downward trend since 2012, due to the introduction and expansion of the HPV vaccination into the national immunisation schedule. However, Trafford's HPV vaccination coverage has decreased for females and is not showing strong performance nationally.
- 1.2.2.7 **Mycoplasma Genitalium (Mgen):** Trafford's Mgen diagnostic rate per 100,000 was 21.6 in 2023, slightly above the England and GM average and third highest in GM. The number of Mgen diagnoses in 2023 (51) increased by 59.4% since 2022 and 466.7% since 2019; this is due to increased testing in our sexual health clinic which is not taking place as standard in other areas.
- 1.2.2.8 **Teenage Conception:** Teenage conception in Trafford is below the national average and the lowest in Greater Manchester, although Partington in the west has historically been above the national average for teenage conception, showing socioeconomic disparities in reproductive health outcomes. This improved in 2018-2020 but it is difficult to tell if this was impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1.2.2.9 **Abortion Rate:** The total abortion rate in Trafford is similar to the national and GM averages, however Trafford has a higher rate of under 18s pregnancies that lead to abortions compared to the national average and is the highest in GM.
- 1.2.2.10 **Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC):** LARC rates in Trafford are increasing, with the total and GP prescribed LARC rates similar to the national average. Trafford's LARC provision is substantially lower in the North and West PCN where inequalities are higher and LARC prescribed in SRH services is lower than the national average.

### 1.3 Engagement and Research

- 1.3.1 Engagement work done in Trafford in March and November 2020 shows that Trafford residents most commonly use GPs and sexual health services for support. Most residents would like more services available to them, closer to their home and available outside of work hours.

- 1.3.2 Educational outreach and mixed methods research carried out by the Voice of BME Trafford in June 2023 highlighted disparities in the knowledge and use of LARC in women from ethnically diverse communities in Trafford and identified the need for additional education and awareness regarding the side effects of contraception and timings of postpartum contraception use.
- 1.3.3 Feedback from the Trafford Women’s Voices event in January 2024 highlighted the need to ensure the collaboration between primary care and Trafford’s strong VCFSE sector and Trafford Community Collective in relation to women’s health to understand the barriers to women from underserved communities in accessing sexual health services in Trafford.

## 1.4 Changes in Sexual Health Behaviour

- 1.4.1 The global pandemic has led to disengagement in sexual health services. We have particularly seen a reduction in the attendance of young people at sexual health clinics and an increase in risky sexual behaviours.
- 1.4.2 There has been a rise in misinformation regarding sexual health via social media such as TikTok preventing the uptake of LARCs.
- 1.4.3 There has been a reduction in the use of condoms in Gay, Bisexual and other men who have sex with men due to PrEP.
- 1.4.4 There has been a rise in STIs in older adults potentially exacerbated by the tendency to desexualise people once they reach a certain age and a reluctance by professionals to openly discuss sexual health.

## 2. Relevance to Trafford’s Health and Wellbeing Board

- 2.1 Sexual health has strong connections to all Trafford Health and Wellbeing Board Responsibilities and Priorities.

HWBB Responsibility	Sexual Health Implications
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sexual health needs and outcomes to be considered in local priorities to meet health and social care needs and the wider determinants of health.</li> <li>Sexual health and wellbeing are crucial markers of health equity in a population and meaningful indicators of residents’ health and wellbeing (<a href="#">Mitchell et al., 2023</a>).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trafford's Sexual Health Needs Assessment 2024 highlights inequalities for certain demographics.</li> <li>• Sexual ill-health is strongly linked to deprivation.</li> <li>• Sexual health service provision and access varies in Trafford according to geography and demographics.</li> </ul>
Better Care Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting residents who have experienced sexual violence or abuse and complex sexual health issues (e.g. those living with HIV) with housing and social care needs using a trauma-informed approach.</li> <li>• Develop and embed community-led, community-based and culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and/or services that enhance sexual health literacy and reproductive choice for all priority populations, such as people living with disabilities, older people, people experiencing homelessness, and young people disengaged from school, residing in out of care or the youth justice system.</li> </ul>
Child Deaths in Trafford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother-to-child transmission of STIs can lead to stillbirth, neonatal death and low birth weight (<a href="#">Korenromp et al., 2019</a>; <a href="#">WHO, 2024</a>).</li> <li>• Impact of sexual abuse or exploitation as a contributing factor to child deaths (<a href="#">NSPCC, 2024, 2024b</a>).</li> </ul>
Health Protection and Infection Prevention and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing, testing, and treating STIs</li> <li>• Managing outbreaks of STIs and infections linked to sexual health e.g. mpox and extensively drug-resistant (XDR) and multidrug-resistant (MDR) gonorrhoea and shigella.</li> </ul>
Trafford Women's Voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's health hubs and single services to address a number of women's health concerns</li> <li>• Addressing intersectional inequalities in sexual and reproductive health outcomes in Trafford e.g. access to long-acting reversible contraception, reduction in secondary care waiting times, and improvement in patient</li> </ul>

	<p>experience through utilising trauma-informed and lived experience approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educating young women and boys on healthy relationships and women's sexual and reproductive health in schools.</li> </ul>
Development and Publication of Trafford's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Pharmacy is responsible for delivering sexual health services, support and advice, with an increasing role regarding contraception provision.</li> <li>• The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment includes the provision of sexual health services by community pharmacies across Trafford, including geographic variation in access to these services.</li> </ul>
HWB Priority	Sexual Health Implications
To reduce the impact of poor mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect of poor sexual health outcomes on mental health</li> <li>• Interaction between hormonal contraception and mental health e.g. contraindications</li> <li>• Impact of poor mental health on risky sexual behaviours and safety in sexual experiences</li> <li>• LGBTQIA+ populations have higher rates of mental health problems, including depression, attempted suicide, low self-esteem, and self-harm, than their heterosexual population (<a href="#">NIESR, 2016</a>).</li> </ul>
To reduce the number of people who smoke or use tobacco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher smoking and vaping prevalence in LGBTQIA+ population compared to the heterosexual population (<a href="#">NIESR, 2016</a>; <a href="#">Truth Initiative, 2024</a>).</li> <li>• Impact of smoking on fertility, sexual dysfunction, and oral contraception (<a href="#">ASH, 2021</a>)</li> </ul>
To reduce harms from alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People engaging in alcohol and substance use are more likely to report risky sexual behaviours and adverse sexual health outcomes (unintended pregnancies, unprotected sex, transmission of STIs and HIV) (<a href="#">Khadr et al., 2016</a>).</li> <li>• Risk of harms from alcohol in people engaging in chemsex (use of drugs specifically to enhance sexual experiences) (<a href="#">EDP, 2022</a>; <a href="#">Strong et al., 2022</a>).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher prevalence of alcohol and substance use in LGBTQIA+ populations compared to the heterosexual population (<a href="#">NIESR, 2016</a>).</li> </ul>
To reduce physical inactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of physical inactivity and obesity on sexual satisfaction and dysfunction (<a href="#">Esfahani and Pal, 2018</a>; <a href="#">Jiannine, 2018</a>; <a href="#">Allen, 2019</a>).</li> <li>Effect of obesity on fertility, pregnancy complications, and menstrual abnormalities (<a href="#">RCOG, 2018</a>; <a href="#">Itriyeva, 2022</a>; <a href="#">Marinelli et al., 2022</a>).</li> <li>Effect of BMI and obesity on risk factors with hormonal contraception and the need for informative contraception counselling (<a href="#">FSRH, 2019</a>; <a href="#">Boyce and Neiterman, 2021</a>).</li> <li>Lesbian and bisexual women are at increased risk of being obese or overweight compared to heterosexual women (<a href="#">Semlyen et al., 2020</a>).</li> <li>The role of Trafford Leisure Trust in promoting sexual health services and sexual wellbeing.</li> </ul>
To support our residents to be a healthy weight	

## 2.2 Return on Investment for Sexual Health

2.2.1 Sexual health offers substantial savings to the health and care system.

- Increasing Long-Acting Reversible Contraception by 16% in Trafford will save £2.5m over three years (Organon/Bayer modelling tool).
- Every £1 spent on contraception gives £11 savings in health care costs (DH 2013)
- Every £1 on LARC gives system wide savings of £48 (PHE 2021)
- A single case of HIV gives a cost to the system of £360,000 across an individual's lifetime (NAT, 2017). The drug PrEP reduces a person's chance of getting HIV by 86% (Lancet 2023).
- STI online self-sampling kits saves £2.07 for every £1 spent (Wilson 2017)
- Chlamydia screening leads to a 61% reduction in pelvic inflammatory disease by (Price 2016)

## 3. Current Provision and Progress

### 3.1 Trafford Sexual Health Services

3.1.1 Trafford has a number of services to support the sexual health of its residents.

- 3.1.2 A full description of all local service and contact details can be found on the Trafford Council Directory under the page [‘Sexual Health Services in Trafford’](#).
- 3.1.3 **The Northern Contraception, Sexual Health and HIV Service:** Offers sexual health support and services for contraception (including emergency contraception); testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs); HIV prevention, treatment, and care; pregnancy testing; abortion counselling; menopause support; psychosocial counselling; chemsex support; Onyx clinic for trans and gender diverse individuals. This is through the main Urmston Hub and outreach clinics at Partington Health Centre and Trafford Talkshop (young people’s provision). They also hold a walk in clinic for young people once a week and outreach services to vulnerable Trafford residents.
- 3.1.4 **Other specialist sexual health clinics:** Trafford residents can attend any other specialist sexual health clinic in the country as service are open access.
- 3.1.5 **General Practice provision:** General sexual health advice and support including contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STI) testing and treatment, and specifically commissioned services to provide Long- Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC). LARCs include implants and coils and are a more effective form of contraception compared to the oral contraceptive pill. A number of Trafford surgeries offer inter-practice referrals and self-referrals for LARC for any Trafford resident.
- 3.1.6 **Pharmacy Provision:** Offer free Emergency Hormonal Contraception and can also provide repeat and new prescriptions for oral hormonal contraception. Free chlamydia and gonorrhoea home screening kits are also available at some pharmacies for Trafford residents aged 16-24 years.
- 3.1.7 **Accident and Emergency Services:** MFT A&E departments now undertake opt-out testing for HIV.
- 3.1.8 **Passionate About Sexual Health (PASH):** This contract is made up of three services, LGBT Foundation, BHA for Equality and George House Trust. They provide tailored support for people newly diagnosed, living with, or at risk of getting HIV in Trafford. They test for HIV and STIs in the community and provide free condoms to people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and to residents from ethnically diverse communities 18 years and over).
- 3.1.9 **SH24:** Provide free home testing for HIV and syphilis to all Trafford residents.
- 3.1.10 **Brook:** Provide free online Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea tests to individuals aged between 16-24 years. They also provide test kits to a number of local organisations in Trafford, such as Talkshop and local pharmacies.

- 3.1.11 **BPAS:** Residents can self-refer for an abortion at the Trafford clinic or at other clinics across GM.
- 3.1.12 **Saint Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC):** Provides a supportive forensic, counselling and aftercare service to men, women and children living in the Greater Manchester area who have experienced rape or sexual assault, helping individuals recover from the physical and emotional impact of sexual assault.
- 3.1.13 **Trafford Rape Crisis:** provide a confidential helpline service, group activities and counselling. They also offer specialist support for individuals from ethnically diverse communities.
- 3.1.14 **Talkshop:** Have youth workers trained in sexual health advice and offer free condoms, pregnancy tests, and Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening. Weekly drop-ins are held in conjunction with the Northern.
- 3.1.15 **Maternity Services:** New pilot project to train MFT midwives to fit contraceptive implants to vulnerable groups post pregnancy. They are offering training and opportunities for increased conversations around contraception through the main midwifery service.
- 3.1.16 **School Health:** Young people can access sexual health and wellbeing advice in schools through health promotion activities and drop-ins or one-to-one sessions with their School Nurse. A new project is starting in September 2024 to distribute free condoms and Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening kits.
- 3.1.17 **Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH):** provides sexual health advice and testing for female sex workers in Greater Manchester and women at risk of entering sex work who are sleeping rough.
- 3.1.18 **Health Visitors:** Provide contraception advice as part of core service offer.

## 3.2 Performance data

### 3.2.1 The Northern Contraception Sexual Health and HIV Service

The Northern service had 9,527 attendances in its Trafford clinics in 2023-24. Figures show that 2,249 online STI screening kits were ordered by Trafford residents in 2023-24 with a 75% return rate. In addition to this, 6,024 STI screens were carried out within the Trafford clinic. The clinic diagnosed 1230 STIs with gonorrhoea accounting for 35% of diagnoses and chlamydia 33%. The service gave 517 vaccinations for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis and Human papillomavirus (HPV). Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) was given to 508 people to prevent those in target cohorts from catching HIV. This is a drug that reduces a person's chance of getting HIV by 86% and is given to those residents most at risk of contracting the virus. The service provided 2843 main methods of contraception and 451 secondary methods in that period. Patient

feedback from the Northern is extremely positive with the average rating on quality of care at 4.9 out of 5.

### 3.2.2 **General Practices**

General Practices in Trafford fitted 1247 LARCs in 2023-24. Without this service, Trafford would have 106 more intended pregnancies each year which could have a significant impact on individuals and large costs to health and social care. Only 10% of the LARCs fitted were in the West and 13% in the North showing that there are still inequalities where it is needed most.

### 3.2.3 **Community Pharmacies**

2,101 women accessed emergency hormonal contraception from Trafford pharmacies in 2023-24. 46% of these prescriptions were for residents under the age of 25 years and 27% from ethnically diverse communities. 72% of these individuals had unprotected sex. Without this Public Health funded service, there could be substantially more unintended pregnancies and abortions.

### 3.2.4 **SH:24**

234 HIV and Syphilis postal kits were distributed between April and December 2023 by SH24.

### 3.2.5 **Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH)**

An average of six sex workers per quarter were supported with their health, wellbeing, safety and financial circumstances by MASH.

### 3.2.6 **Brook**

1384 Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening kits were ordered by young people from Brook in 2023-24 leading to 111 diagnoses. A high proportion were ordered in the North of the borough.

### 3.2.7 **Passionate about Sexual Health (PASH)**

Each quarter, PASH support services engaged with 118 people from Black, Asian and ethnic marginalised communities in Trafford and 95 Trafford residents living with HIV.

## 3.3 **Governance of Sexual Health**

3.3.1 The Trafford Sexual Health Network is a collective partnership of key stakeholder organisations and local representatives in Trafford and Greater Manchester (GM). Its primary role is to provide strategic leadership to improve the sexual health outcomes of Trafford's population and to reduce the sexual and reproductive health inequalities, stigma and discrimination experienced by communities most at risk of poor sexual health.

3.3.2 The Sexual Health Network meets quarterly and reports into the Trafford Provider Collaborative Board. The Network is chaired by the lead Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine for Trafford's Integrated Sexual Health Service provider, Dr Sally Jewsbury.

3.3.3 The Sexual Health Network is developing a three-year action plan to improve access to sexual health services, strengthen integrated working, promote sexual health and services and train professionals.

### **3.4 Service Improvements**

3.4.1 There have been a number of improvements in sexual health services in recent years.

#### **Public Health:**

- 3.4.1.1 Trafford's Public Health team have written a full Sexual Health Needs Assessment, finalised in 2024, for Trafford exploring the data and trends and the services available.
- 3.4.1.2 Public health has worked with the Northern service to establish a leadership role for the service across the sexual health system. This is seen through strategic input, chairing of the Sexual Health Network and giving training and advice to local professionals.
- 3.4.1.3 The newly formed Trafford Sexual Health Network has carried out workshops and meetings with stakeholder organisations to shape the future direction of sexual health services based on the Sexual Health Needs Assessment.
- 3.4.1.4 Public Health is currently re-tendering Trafford's Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening service for young people to try to increase take up.
- 3.4.1.5 Re-contracting for Trafford's HIV support service collaboratively with other GM authorities.
- 3.4.1.6 Establishing new sexual health service contracts and continual monitoring and development of all provider services.

#### **Northern Sexual Health Service:**

- 3.4.1.7 Trafford has an increased number of specific young people clinics in Trafford, with a session at the Northern clinic in Urmston and the Northern's Partington outreach site opening in addition to Trafford Talkshop in Sale.

- 3.4.1.8 The Northern outreach service has been successful in reaching vulnerable young people in residential homes, Pupil Referral units and directly to pupils with special educational needs.
- 3.4.1.9 Sexual health essentials training delivered by the Northern service to a range of Trafford professionals.

#### **VCSFE organisations:**

- 3.4.1.10 Trafford Council Public Health have commissioned the Voice of BME Trafford to deliver a variety of interventions to increase awareness and access of LARC among ethnically diverse communities in North Trafford to address misconceptions about LARC. Research suggests that contraception use, in particular LARC, is significantly lower in all women from ethnically diverse communities compared to white British women due to cultural, religious and language barriers. The mixed methods research carried out in June 2023 highlighted disparities in the knowledge and use of LARC in women from ethnically diverse communities in Trafford. As well as identifying the need for additional education and awareness regarding the side effects of contraception and timings of postpartum contraception use.
- 3.4.1.11 Training has been provided to VCSFE organisations in sexual health through the Northern and Brook to increase knowledge and expand sexual health advice and signposting in the community.

#### **Primary Care Provision:**

- 3.4.1.12 The new GP LARC contract for 2024-25 saw increases in pricing from Trafford Council Public Health to work towards a more sustainable service.
- 3.4.1.13 Substantial work has taken place across Trafford in recent years to support a rise in GP LARC delivery by 16% and reach the England average. GP practices in Trafford have shown an admirable commitment to the delivery of LARC as part of their overall offer to patients.
- 3.4.1.14 Several pieces of work have been developed collaboratively through primary care, Public Health, the Northern service and the pharmaceutical companies Bayer and Organon. These include:
- A clear training pathway to become a LARC fitter with funding from Trafford Public Health to ensure it is free for practitioners. An additional 14 doctors and nurses have been trained to fit LARC 14 since 2021 and another 10 expressed an interest or are part way through the training.
  - A LARC Inter-practice Referral Service across GP practices, including an inter-practice referral pathway, where patients can be

referred or self-refer to another GP practice in Trafford for a LARC fitting or removal.

- 1:1 support to practices starting LARC clinics for the first time.
- A refreshed Urgent Referral Pathway into The Northern's Sexual Health Service from primary care for urgent and complex LARC and sexual health referrals.
- 'Primary Care Lunch and Learn Sessions' to provide support to GP practices and Community Pharmacy staff delivering sexual health services. These sessions are an opportunity to meet and network with other primary care sexual health and share examples of best practice, troubleshoot common problems and discuss relevant updates.

### **Pharmacy provision:**

- 3.4.1.15 New developments have also been made to the 2024-25 Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) service for Community Pharmacy, with a referral pathway from pharmacies delivering EHC to The Northern for an emergency LARC fitting or a consultation.
- 3.4.1.16 As part of the EHC services, pharmacies will be paid £5 for each referral made to The Northern for LARC to attempt to reduce future need.

### **Promoting services:**

- 3.4.1.17 The Trafford Directory page on Sexual Health has been updated, including a map of sexual health services.
- 3.4.1.18 A range of posters have been developed to promote the Northern clinics, Primary Care LARC, Brook chlamydia and gonorrhoea screening service, and the young people's offer. These will be disseminated in the community.
- 3.4.1.19 Trafford Council Public Health and Communications Teams are working collaboratively to develop a Communications Plan and draft public communications on the rise in STIs and how to access sexual health services.

## **4. Current challenges in Sexual Health**

- 4.1.1 There is continued increase in STI rates in Trafford and nationally, potentially due to lack of capacity for STI testing and changes in sexual behaviour. There is a need for more cost-effective online home STI testing and opt-out testing for HIV in primary care. However, there are no funds to support it.
- 4.1.2 Ring-fenced funding via the Public Health Grant has been cut in real terms nationally by 40% which prevents the expansion of sexual health services. This has resulted in a reduction in spending on sexual health services by

Councils by almost 17% between 2015-16 and 2020-21, despite an increase in consultations and demand for services. Trafford's Public Health budget for GP LARC delivery was overspent in 2023-24 by £30,000.

- 4.1.3 There has been a lack of a national sexual health strategy since 2001 and no increased funding to deal with capacity issues across the system.
- 4.1.4 The capacity of specialist sexual health clinics is reducing due to increasing demand, complexity, changing services and increased vaccination programmes. Access is a huge issue with online home testing kits for asymptomatic patients and appointments through the Northern running out quickly, sometimes in a matter of minutes. These pressures on services reduce the ability to offer preventative services and create increased future need.
- 4.1.5 The main sexual health service's premises are not fit for purpose and need considerable investment. The premises are not in an ideal location in the borough aligned with greatest need. There are no alternative buildings available.
- 4.1.6 There is less sexual health provision in the areas that need it most. An example is that there is no clinical space in Old Trafford for the sexual health clinic to run a regular outreach clinic. Another example is that less LARCs are fitted in the West and North of Trafford. The North PCN Women's Health Hub may increase access to LARCs in the north. Partington Family Practice have opened a Saturday LARC clinic to address access in the West but are struggling to fill slots. Enabling data sharing across PCNs on a Trafford wide level could ensure these appointments are filled with Trafford women.
- 4.1.7 There is poor awareness of alternative sexual health services leading to lack of access by Trafford residents. Healthwatch Trafford are undertaking a Healthwatch 100 survey in September 2024 to capture residents' views on accessing sexual health services, advice and support in Trafford.
- 4.1.8 Certain groups of residents face higher inequalities in sexual health and more targeted services are needed. There is also a need for promotion of existing services to encourage take up in key groups.
- 4.1.9 Young people are not accessing sexual health services as much as they did pre-pandemic. Campaigns have been run through youth services and Talkshop have been specifically commissioned to give talks in secondary schools yet access for 16–24 year olds is still poor.
- 4.1.10 Trafford Council is unable to expand LARC delivery due to a lack of additional funding for sexual health services. General Practices are fitting LARCs on behalf of Community Gynaecology services which are putting additional pressures on budgets. The GM Women's Health Hub programme may lead to a business case to resolve this issue.
- 4.1.11 Sexual health does not have a high enough profile in Trafford among

residents and professionals. Papers have been taken to Trafford's Clinical Practitioner Senate and Trafford's Provider Collaborative Board in August 2024. A paper to the Council executive is planned for October 2024.

- 4.1.12 There is limited capacity in Trafford's Public Health team to lead additional programmes of work around sexual health. A full business plan has been developed for 2024-25 and agreed actions are being prioritised.

## **5. Health and Wellbeing Board Recommendations**

- 5.1.1 Acknowledge the impact and interrelation between sexual health and Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Board responsibilities and priorities, noting the importance of good sexual health in improving the lives of Trafford residents and reducing health inequalities.
- 5.1.2 Acknowledge the current barriers and challenges in sexual health across Trafford and their wider impact on the health and wellbeing of Trafford residents.
- 5.1.3 Support Trafford Council's Public Health team in ensuring maximum awareness of STIs and Trafford's sexual health services among residents.
- 5.1.4 Advocating for addressing the sexual health needs of Trafford residents through innovative joint working across the health and social care system and with health-related services.