


<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Board</p> <p>10th June 2024</p>	 <p>Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board</p>
<p>Report of: Somen Banerjee, Director of Public Health</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Report Title: North East London (NEL) Sexual and reproductive health strategy 2024 –2029 Draft</p>	

Originating Officer(s)	Sukhjit Sanghera, Public Health programme lead Liam Crosby, Associate Director of Public health
Wards affected	All wards

Reasons for urgency

This NEL-wide strategy report was not published within the statutory timescale as it was received late due to delays in getting this through governance arrangements in Newham. The report needs to go through the respective Health and Wellbeing Boards for formal adoption and to ensure that this process isn't delayed and publication can proceed along the timetable, consideration at this Board is important.

Executive Summary

This cover report for the North East London (NEL) Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2024- 2029 summarises why it is important to have a joint strategy across NEL and sets out the approach for developing and implementing the strategy.

Tower Hamlets faces some of the greatest sexual and reproductive health (SRH) challenges including high rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), low use of suitable contraception.

These challenges are the same across NEL boroughs (Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Hackney) and sexual and reproductive health services and patient journeys regularly cross borough Borders.

The current landscape for SRH services is complex, with different aspects of reproductive and sexual health being commissioned and delivered by different organisations.

To respond to shared challenges, we have developed a joint NEL wide sexual and reproductive health strategy for 2024-2029. This strategy provides an opportunity to set out a new vision for working collaboratively to respond to these challenges and improve the delivery of SRH services.

The shared vision of the strategy is to empower residents to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, where they have the knowledge and ability to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and have timely access to high quality inclusive sexual and reproductive health services.

The NEL sexual and reproductive health (SRH) strategy has been developed through extensive engagement with residents and partners across NEL

The strategy sets out four key priorities for action:

1. healthy fulfilling relationships
2. good reproductive health across the life course
3. high quality and innovative STI testing and treatment
4. moving towards zero HIV transmission.

Our residents have told us that these are important priorities for the NEL sexual and reproductive health strategy.

To achieve the outcomes of the strategy annual action plans have been developed in collaboration with partners across NEL (sexual and reproductive health service providers, young people service providers, GPs and community pharmacies and voluntary sector providers and local authority leads and ICB).

Two action plans have been developed: one covering NEL wide overarching actions and one covering borough specific local actions that will contribute to achieving the aims of the strategy.

Once the strategy is approved by this HWBB (and HWBBs in other Boroughs) it will be formally launched on 11th September 2024.

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Note the content of the strategy and approve the joint NEL sexual and reproductive health strategy. **Appendix 1**
2. Note the content of the year 1 NEL and Tower Hamlets actions to be implemented. **Appendix 2**
3. **Note** the content of the year 1 Tower Hamlets actions to be implemented. **Appendix 3**
4. Advise how the HWBB wishes to be informed on the implementation of the strategy actions.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 A joint sexual and reproductive health strategy provides an opportunity to set out a new vision for North East London and shape SRH services to address the rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), build seamless care pathways between services, joined-up commissioning, jointly work to reducing the stigma attached to STIs and HIV and reducing health inequalities.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 HWWB could chose not to approve this strategy and instead request that Tower Hamlets has its own strategy, but this is not in line with the way sexual and reproductive health provision is offered. Sexual and reproductive service provision are required by statutory regulation to be open access which means that residents can access specialist clinics outside of Tower Hamlets and working with providers and commissioners collaboratively allows for a coherent system where we reduce the risk of a fragmented system of SRH and related services and have more unified system that facilitates access for our residents.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Why sexual and reproductive health is important

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets faces some of the greatest sexual and reproductive health (SRH) challenges including high rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), low use of suitable contraception such as Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC).
- 3.3 Tower Hamlets population has high and growing need around sexual and reproductive health. The size of our young and sexually active population has grown substantially. We have large and growing populations in key 'at risk' groups (the groups with highest rates of STIs including young people, minority ethnic groups, and Gay and Bisexual Men who have Sex with Men (GBMSM); and groups with highest need for reproductive health which include young women.

Strategy development approach with partners and residents

- 3.5 Integrated sexual health services, GPs, community pharmacies, education, voluntary and third sector organisations are our key partners that deliver sexual and reproductive services, health education and outreach to our residents.

- 3.6 NEL Local authorities, NEL Integrated Care Board and NHS England are our partners that commission services for sexual and reproductive health.
- 3.7 Across NEL 8 local authorities have developed a five-year sexual and reproductive health strategy, via extensive engagement with residents and stakeholders. 525 residents across NEL responded to a survey which consulted on the SRH strategy priority areas. Four in- person workshops were held with partners across the sector to identify key actions what actions need to be undertaken to deliver on the aims of the strategy.
- 3.8 The vision of the strategy is to deliver high quality, easy-access and equitable provision across the whole of NEL, with the prevention of illness and the promotion of healthy relationships being at the core of all activity. The Draft NEL sexual and reproductive health strategy is attached as a separate document in Appendix 1.
- 3.9 The strategy offers opportunities for joining up commissioning to improve patient journey and experiences in services. The joint strategy promotes a holistic way of working, joining-up pathways and economies of scale.

Summary of NEL SRH strategy

- 3.10 The aim of the strategy is to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for residents by:
- a. Ensuring that our residents have the ability and freedom to make safe informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health
 - b. Provide high quality accessible services to residents regardless of who they are and where they live.

The NEL SRH Strategy has four priority areas:

- a) Healthy and Fulfilling Sexual Relationships
- b) Good Reproductive Health Across the Life Course
- c) High Quality and Innovative STI Screening and Treatment
- d) HIV: Towards Zero

- 3.11 Underpinning the strategy, we have developed a set of Action Plans, which set out how providers, commissioners and other partners across the sector will work together to achieve the strategy's outcomes. One of these Action Plans is specific to Tower Hamlets, while another cover actions planned at NEL-wide level. This approach allows us to collaborate to deliver an overarching strategy and to take local action as needed. NEL action plan is enclosed in Appendix 2 and the Tower

Hamlets

- 3.11.1 **The NEL wide action plan** includes areas of action that relate to collaborative actions:
- Ensuring that our shared sexual and reproductive health services are providing services that are modern and adaptive to the needs of our residents
 - Ensuring that our residents can access information about services and know how to access them
 - Better integration between related services commissioned by NEL Local Authorities and NEL ICB (i.e. SRH services, HIV treatment services, abortion and maternity services).
 - Better and consistent recording of demographic information about our residents that use SRH services.

- 3.11.2 **The Tower Hamlets action plan** includes areas of action that relate to borough specific needs:
- Understanding young people's needs about relationship and sex education (RSE). Understanding how schools are locally delivering SRE and mapping this against the national guidance on sex and relationship educations and what is delivered in secondary schools.
 - Improving LARC (long-acting reversable contraception, the most reliable form of contraception) in GPs and addressing inequalities in LARC use.
 - Working with communities to reduce the stigma associated with HIV and STIs and expand sexual health promotion using co-productions approaches.

3.12 Progress in delivering this strategy and NEL action plan will be overseen by the NEL Sexual and reproductive health steering group comprising of NEL borough public health leads/commissioners and NEL ICB commissioners.

3.13 The Tower Hamlets sexual and reproductive health partnership group is the forum which has developed the Tower Hamlets action plan and oversees the implementation during quarterly meetings, this group includes Public Health, sexual health providers including All East, Safe East, GPs, CVS, education, healthy lives team, VAWG and youth service providers). Each borough's Health and Wellbeing Board will also have oversight of the implementation of the strategy.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects us all from discrimination or harassment as a result of a personal characteristic. Good sexual and reproductive health is not equally distributed in the population. Some groups are more at risk of poorer sexual and/or reproductive health based on a common characteristic, most notably young people, Black communities, and GBMSM.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

NA

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

NA

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

NA

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- NEL Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2024-2029 Draft
- NEL Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy - 2024-25 action plan
- NEL Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy - 2024-25 Tower Hamlets Action plan

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None.

Officer contact details for documents:

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