



CABINET - 13 SEPTEMBER 2024

**PROBATION HEALTH TRAINER SERVICE – OUTCOME OF THE
ENGAGEMENT AND PROPOSED DECOMMISSION**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to advise the Cabinet of the outcome of engagement on the proposed decommissioning of the Probation Health Trainer Service and seek its approval for cessation of the Service.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - (a) The outcome of the engagement on the proposed decommission of the Probation Health Service across Leicestershire be noted;
 - (b) The Probation Health Service be decommissioned as of the 31 March 2025.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The proposal follows a review of need, existing service provision, the Council's responsibilities, and a review of engagement responses.
4. The current contract for the Probation Health Trainer service ends on 31 March 2025. Alternative services to support the health and wellbeing of these service users are available.
5. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2027/28 includes a requirement for savings via a review of commissioned services.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

6. An engagement exercise took place from 7 May 2024 to 28 June 2024 to seek views on the proposal to decommission the service.
7. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the matter at its meeting on 5 June 2024 and its comments are set out in Part B of this report.

8. The existing contract ends on 31 March 2025. Subject to approval by the Cabinet, an exit strategy will commence to end the contract by this date.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2027/28 (agreed by the Council on 22 February 2024) includes a target of saving £90,000 of the overall Public Health budget by 1 April 2025 through a review of commissioned services.
10. Provision of support is aligned with the Public Health Strategy "Delivering good health and prevention services 2022-2027", the Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032 "Staying Healthy, Safe and Well", and the County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-26, in particular the outcome keeping people safe and well: ensuring that people are safe and protected from harm, live in a healthy environment and have the opportunities and support they need to live active, independent and fulfilling lives.

Resource Implications

11. The proposed model has a target of achieving a saving of £67,500 per annum which would contribute to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

13. None.

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PART B

Background

14. The Probation Health Trainer (PHT) Service contract has been delivered locally since April 2022. It supports adult offenders on community orders or on licence following release from prison to make changes towards a healthier lifestyle. By offering individualised assistance, the service helps clients access various health and wellbeing services, including GP and dental care. Health trainers work with clients on a one-to-one basis to assess their health and lifestyle needs, develop Personal Health Plans, and provide ongoing support for sustained behaviour change towards improved wellbeing. Referrals into the service are predominantly received from the Probation Service.
15. The service was jointly commissioned by the County Council and Leicester City Council, with a total contract value of £167,500 per annum (the County Council contributing £67,500 and the City Council £100,000) which commenced April 2022. Separate contracts are in place for each of the Local Authorities. The service is provided by Ingeus and the initial term of the contract ends on 31 March 2025 (there is an option to extend for a further 24 months until 31 March 2027).
16. The County Council has a statutory duty to take appropriate steps to improve the health of people living in Leicestershire, including the provision of health improvement information and advice and support services aimed at preventing illness.
17. Evidence from the Revolving Doors agency, the Home Office and Public Health England (now the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) identifies the mortality rate for prisoners is 50% higher than the rest of the population. People leaving prison are therefore one of several populations of particular concern for the County Council in terms of their health and wellbeing.

Review of Existing Provision

18. A service review was undertaken in autumn 2023. This included engagement with service users and staff, mapping of similar services across the England, a review of performance, and a review of the evidence of effectiveness.
19. The main strengths of the existing provision are that:
 - Service users value the support provided;
 - Health trainers providing the service have lived experience of the criminal justice system;
 - The service is co-located with probation teams across the County and City and therefore strengthening the partnership approach.

20. There were several limitations that were identified from the review, summarised below.
21. The service at the time of review was supporting a relatively small number of individuals. In 2022/23, 40 individuals had a personal health plan completed and of those, 19 (47%) achieved their plan. Since then, performance improved and in 2023/24 119 individuals had a personal health plan completed and of those, 88 (74%) achieved their plan.
22. While evidence suggests that a health trainer service can lead to improvement in health-related behaviours, provision based in Probation settings provided the least impact on behaviour and made tracking for evaluation difficult (compared to delivery in other service settings such as prison or mental health facilities).
23. NHS England recently launched the Reconnect service which is provided locally by the Leicestershire Partnership Trust. This provides a 'care after custody' service that seeks to improve continuity of care of individuals leaving prison with an identified health need. There are similarities between this service and the PHT service which risks duplication of effort.
24. The substance misuse treatment service also has a criminal justice team which works closely with the Probation Service to support clients leaving prison who have substance use issues. This pathway works well, is a separate service and does not rely on the PHT service to function.
25. The City Council was considering the future funding of the service, creating doubt over the future partnership arrangements for the service.
26. There is only one other such service provided by a local authority in the East Midlands area: most authorities across the country who previously had a PHT service have decommissioned them.
27. As a result of the above and the need to achieve savings as a result of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, it was decided that an engagement exercise be carried out in order to gather evidence of the impact of withdrawing funding to the service when the contract comes to an end in March 2025.

Engagement

28. Engagement with key stakeholders took place for 8 weeks, from 7 May to 28 June 2024. Key stakeholders included service users, Probation Service staff, and staff providing the service. The engagement was in the form of a short survey which the provider promoted and actively encouraged service users and staff to complete.
29. There was a total of 49 surveys received, with 18 from service users, 18 from probation staff and 13 from the provider's staff. This was a positive return rate

in relation to the numbers of possible responses. The service supports approximately 30 people at any one time in Leicestershire.

30. Hard copies of the survey were provided, 30 of which were sent to enable staff to engage with those that attend the service for face-to-face appointments. Of these, 2 responses were returned.
31. Two members of staff were allocated the task of calling both previous and current service users to complete the survey with them should they wish to do so.
32. The survey asked for people's views on:
 - (a) the extent to which they agreed with the proposal to decommission
 - (b) the impact/s of the proposal
 - (c) access to other sources of support
 - (d) alternative suggestions to the proposal
33. The most common themes regarding the type of support received included:
 - (a) For respondents using the service – GP registration and/or appointments 94% (16), referrals to mental health support services 82% (14) and referrals to benefits advice 59% (10).
 - (b) For Probation staff – GP registration and/or appointments 93% (14), referrals to mental health support services 80% (12), referrals to benefits advice 73% (11).
 - (c) For Ingeus staff – GP registration and/or appointments 83% (10), referral to mental health support services 75% (9), dentist registration and/or appointments 67% (8).
34. Support with accessing these most common service areas is currently available through the Reconnect service, commissioned via NHS England and provided locally via the LPT. This again highlights the potential for duplication in service offer between the PHT and Reconnect service.
35. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to allow the contract to end in March 2025. 78% (38) said they disagreed with the proposal, 14% (7) agreed, and 8% (4) neither agreed nor disagreed.
36. Where questions were responded with open text, analysis has been carried out to identify key themes. A summary including commentary that responds to the points made is provided below. The full analysis report from the engagement is provided at Appendix A.

Theme	Commentary
Capacity within the Probation Service to deliver this advice and support in place of the PHT service	Alternative provision is available via services such as Reconnect and other Public Health services such as First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-ordinators. The Probation Service has

	been made aware of the proposed decommissioning but has been unable to identify alternative funding streams in order to continue the service.
Loss of service for this population	Alternative provision is available via services such as Reconnect and other Public Health services such as First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-ordinators.
Impact on service users	
Positive feedback for the service	This is recognised: the potential decommission is not a reflection of the quality of provision.
Unique service with knowledge and experience	This is recognised: the potential decommission is not a reflection of the quality of provision. Alternative provision is available via services such as Reconnect and other Public Health services.

Comments of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

37. In June 2024, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the new service model as part of the engagement process. The Committee queried whether the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) might be able to fund the PHT service in the future and noted that the Probation Service would likely feel the impact of the decommissioning the most. The Committee supported the proposal to decommission the PHT service, but the Director of Public Health was requested to note the Committee's desire for some support for the health needs of offenders to remain in place.
38. Potential funding from the OPCC and the Probation Service has been explored since the Committee meeting but neither organisation has been able to provide this. The engagement process undertaken has identified an impact on the Probation Service but further exploration of the Reconnect service has identified this as a resource to mitigate this impact, alongside other Public Health provision such as First Contact Plus and Local Area Coordinators.

Conclusion

39. The main risk around the proposed decommissioning of the PHT service is that a population which is known to be at higher risk of poor health outcomes will no longer receive the same level of support. However, there are other services available which have a similar remit to support people on their release from custody to access health provision, for example the LPT-delivered Reconnect service, and the Public Health substance misuse treatment service which works closely with the Probation Service to support clients leaving prison.

40. Existing public health services such as First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-ordinators are also available to help in signposting people to local provision and in developing local support networks and connections.
41. In light of the review and the requirement to make savings and having regard to the feedback from the engagement and mitigation to ensure continued support for adult offenders, it is proposed that the PHT service is decommissioned when the contract ends on 31 March 2025.

Equality Implications

42. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and approved by the Public Health Departmental Equalities Group on 8 August 2024 and is attached to this report as Appendix B.
43. The EIA identifies people with some protected characteristics that are overrepresented in the service in comparison to the population of Leicestershire. It is likely that some of this overrepresentation is due to the demographics of the prison population overall. The risk of ending the contract includes the potential for decline in the health and wellbeing of those leaving prison. Mitigations to be put in place include ensuring that the Probation Service and those leaving prison themselves are aware of services such as Reconnect that can support with their health and wellbeing as well as Public Health funded services such as First Contact Plus and Local Area Co-ordinators.

Human Rights Implications

44. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2026/27 - 22 February 2023

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s174734/MTFS%202023-27.pdf>

Report to Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Probation Health Trainer Service – 5 June 2024

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s183164/Probation%20Health%20Trainers%20HOSC%20report%201.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix A - Summary report of Engagement on the proposed decommissioning of the Probation Health Trainers service in Leicestershire

Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

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