



## East Riding: a Clinic on Wheels - the Importance of Outreach Work

In East Riding a mobile sexual health clinic has been established, allowing staff to take services direct to where people are. It forms part of a multi-pronged approach to reach out to local people, especially the young.

17 Mar 2023

### **From health promotion to a mobile clinic**

East Riding's sexual health service has done sexual health promotion outreach work in a variety of settings for many years. A team of support workers has toured schools, colleges, pupil referral units and army bases ever since public health moved into local government.

The team provides advice and raises awareness about the importance of looking after sexual health as well as handing out testing kits, free condoms and pregnancy tests and book appointments remotely. A health promotion bus was also used from time to time to do some mobile outreach work.

When the contract for sexual health services was once again awarded to City Health Care Partnership CIC in 2020 it was decided to build on the outreach model.

A converted Mercedes van was purchased to provide a full-time sexual health clinic on wheels with the support workers upskilled so they could have one-to-ones and discuss concerns during the health promotion visits.

### **‘The mobile unit has great potential’**

Sexual Health Associate Practitioner Tonian Lowe, who leads the outreach work, said: “The mobile unit has given us a much more comprehensive offer for our outreach work. Before we were largely focussed on prevention and awareness. Some of the talks in schools were really hard-hitting and created lots of questions.

“Now we have the mobile unit there it gives pupils more of a chance to go and ask questions, get tested and get contraception. We are doing rolling pop-up clinics in all the colleges and the majority of the sixth forms. We also visit hostels, looked after children’s homes and festivals, LGBTQ+ communities and support young people with a learning disability.”

She said the service is now looking to build on the work that has been done by exploring doing community visits to neighbourhoods with high rates of STIs.

“We have done a pilot one – it was not so popular. At schools and hostels you have a captured audience which was not the case for this. We want to look at how else it could work. At the moment, we are trying to get agreement to offer LARC (long-acting reversible contraception) implants and injections and issue pills – it could be a good way to build an offer that will prove attractive when we do these community visits. The mobile unit has great potential.”

### **The alternative routes in**

But alongside the outreach work Ms Lowe said it was also important to provide alternative routes in for young people. “Getting them to book an appointment in a clinic is not easy. Young people are often anxious or worried about accessing help – I’ve noticed that especially after Covid.

“We have a text service and a virtual clinic on the website as the feedback suggests young people shy away from face-to-face consultations initially. With the texting service the only demographic we receive is their mobile number - they receive a text back immediately stating it has been received and they will be called back. The anonymous part of this is attractive to young people and has been very successful.

“But once we chat to them and have their confidence we then find they are happy to book an appointment. They can do that in a clinic or we can come to their school or home, whatever works for them.”

The service also has a system in place to flag when anyone accessing STI testing online or an appointment has a highlighted safeguarding concern registered against them. They then get a follow-up call.

There is an email service for professionals too, allowing the likes of school nurses, health visitors, midwives and mental health staff to refer directly into the service. “We have worked really hard to reach out to young people in a variety of different ways,” said Ms Lowe.

### **‘We’re maximising the use of our resources’**

Sexual Health Commissioning Lead Isabel Carrick is delighted with how the approach is working, saying it is making a much more cost-effective use of resources.

“We are responding and taking services to where they are needed most – and that is allowing us to make sure we are maximising the use our resources. We share a main hub sexual health clinic with commissioners in Hull and this is open six days a week.

“Being a large rural area, we have also always had spoke clinics in GP centres, community hospitals and other locations. However smaller spoke clinics with limited hours a week were not getting high enough footfall or being open at times when residents needed them.

“The new service model with fewer static clinics and a focus on the mobile clinic is able to provide a much more agile service, reaching out to where there is sexual health need.”

## Contact details

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# New mobile sexual health van hits the road in Sheffield

23 April 2025

A new mobile van helping people get tested and treated for common sexually transmitted infections, protecting their health and the health of others, is being launched by Sexual Health Sheffield in collaboration with Sheffield City Council, who are also funding the initiative.



The mobile testing unit will be driving out to local communities throughout Sheffield from this month, including to marginalised and vulnerable groups, making it even easier for people across the city to get checked and treated for sexually transmitted infections. 

Staff from Sexual Health Sheffield will be available on the mobile clinic every day, from Monday to Friday, to provide routine screening for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, HIV, syphilis and other common sexually transmitted infections.

They will offer free, confidential and non-judgemental information, preventative health advice, and information about other sexual health services available in the city.

Updates on where the mobile health van will be located daily can be found on the Sexual Health Sheffield | Mobile Sexual Health Service web page (<https://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/services/mobile-sexual-health-service/>) or via the Sexual Health Sheffield's Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/SHSheff/>), Instagram, (<https://www.instagram.com/sexualhealthsheffield/>) or X (<https://x.com/SHSheffield>) social media accounts.

Left untreated, a sexually transmitted infection can cause pain and severe health complications, including infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, certain types of cancer, organ failure and pregnancy complications such as miscarriage and ectopic pregnancies.

**Shana Jae Newman, Operational Manager for Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, who provide the Sheffield Sexual Health service, said:**

“Nearly 1 million people are estimated to be infected daily with a curable sexually transmitted infection, so we are delighted to be launching this new health van for the benefit of people across the city. By taking the clinical outreach van out to communities across the city we will meet people where their needs are whilst also expanding access to care.”

The team are also keen to speak to any local agencies and health providers who may be interested in hosting the mobile unit on site, either on a regular basis or as a one-off. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the Health Promotion and Outreach Team on 0114 2713553.

Further information on accessing sexual health services in Sheffield is available on the Sheffield Sexual Health website (<https://www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk/>).