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# Sexual health services during COVID 19

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Leicester  
City Council

# Sexual Health Services in Leicester

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- Leicester City Council receives an annual Public Health grant that includes the requirement to commission :
  - Open access sexual health services
  - Provision of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for Sexual Exposure to HIV



# Leicester City Council Commissions:

- An **open access clinical service** that provides contraception and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections – this is commissioned in collaboration with Leicestershire County and Rutland County Councils
- Intrauterine Devices and Systems (IUS/Ds )and Subdermal Implants (SDIs) are provided **by GPs**- These are collectively called long-acting reversible contraception(LARC)
- Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) is available from **community pharmacies** for under 25s
- Some non-clinical services are also provided provided for certain groups:
  - Sex and relationships education (SRE) support for schools
  - Outreach work with men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers and young people under 25.
  - A project engaging with different BAME communities across Leicester



# Who uses sexual health services ?

The service saw:

- 29,015 people between April 2019 – March 2020
  - (17,489 women and 11,629 men)
- 20,395 people between April 2021 - March 2022
  - 9,068 of which were in person (6,201 women and 2,865 men)
  - 11,327 were online (6,396 women and 4,563 men)
- Most attendees under age 40 and majority under 30 year of age



# Who uses sexual health services?

- Mix of ethnicities: rates highest in those who define as of black or mixed ethnicity
- Men and women with new partners having a check up
- Some high-risk individuals with multiple partners
- *No typical user*, although women more likely to attend for contraception

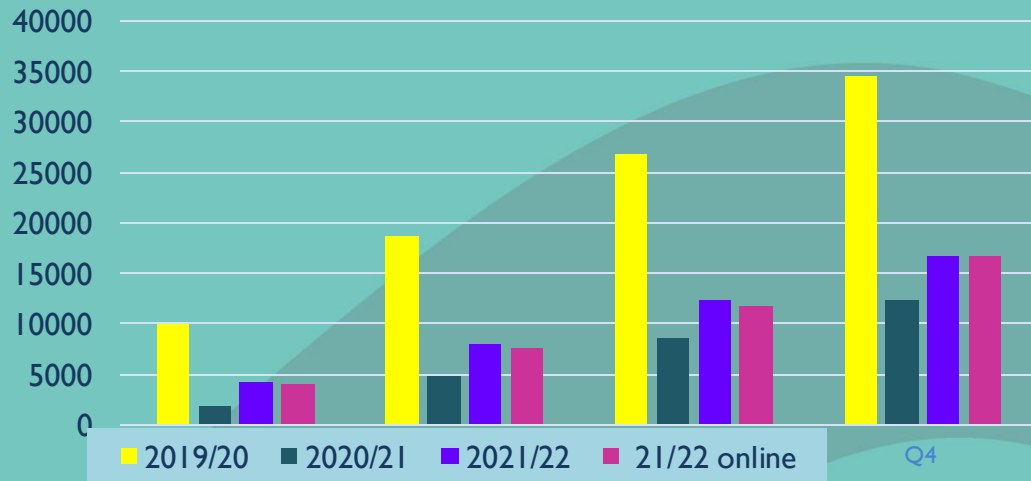
# Changes during the pandemic:



- Sexual Health and Contraceptive services were still needed during the pandemic despite restrictions in social mixing and inability to provide all face-to-face clinical services.
- Therefore the following changes were made:
  - Increased provision of online services :
  - Ordering of STI testing kits – results texted to the individual
  - Ability to safely post treatment for simple STIs to patients
  - Online provision of oral contraception and EHC
  - Provision of telephone consultations
  - Maintenance of face-to-face appointments for emergency care e.g. pelvic pain
  - National clinical adaptations followed e.g. extension in length of time IUDs can be retained, longer repeat prescriptions for oral contraceptives

# What happened to activity

## Activity in Sexual Health Service across three years



-28% overall fall in activity between 2019/20 and 2020/21 .

The face-to-face and online activity (pink bar and purple bar) are nearly equal and show good restoration in activity in Q3 and 4

# Massive increase in online activity and reduction in face to face activity

## Monthly online services, SH24 & Prevent X by financial year



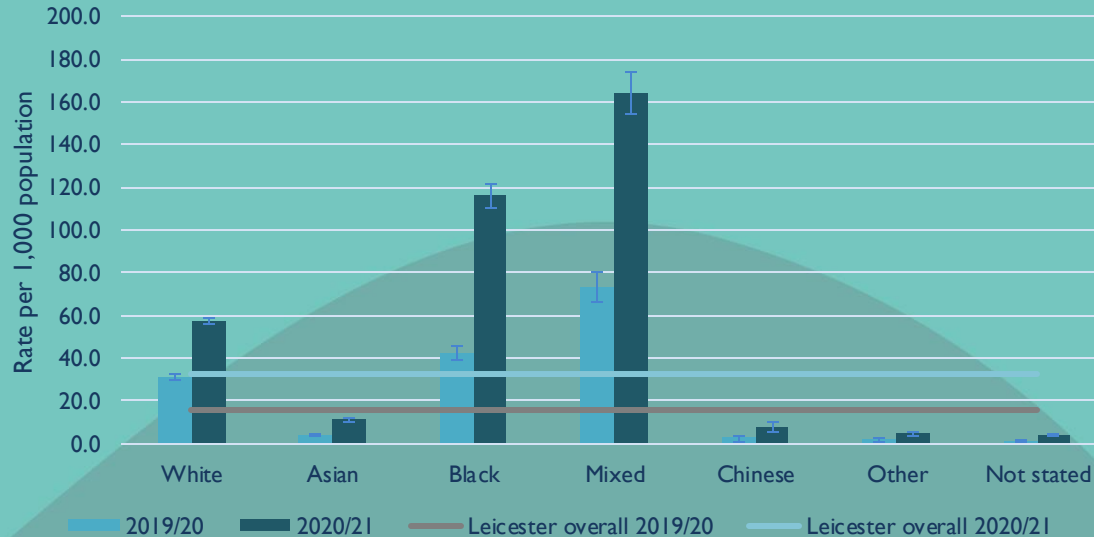
## Monthly Telephone consultations by financial year





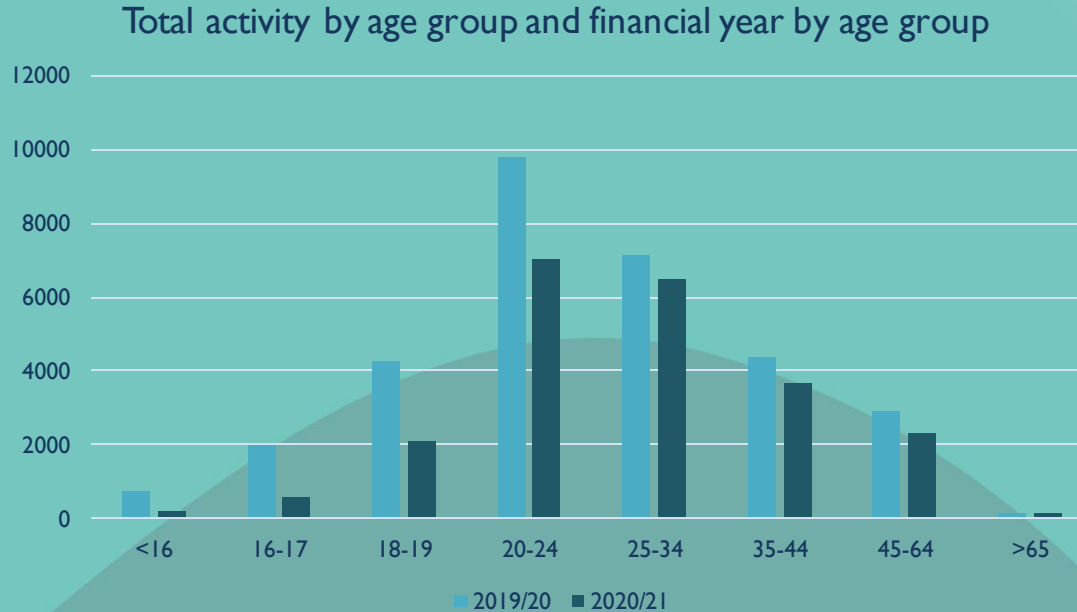
# How were different groups using the service?

Online services, SH24 and Prevent X per 1,000 population age 16-64 by broad ethnic group and financial year



Increased use of online services by people of black and mixed ethnicity

# How were different groups using the service?



Reduction in activity in 2020/21 within the under 25's this may in part be explained by reduced social mixing and less students being in the city during lockdown.

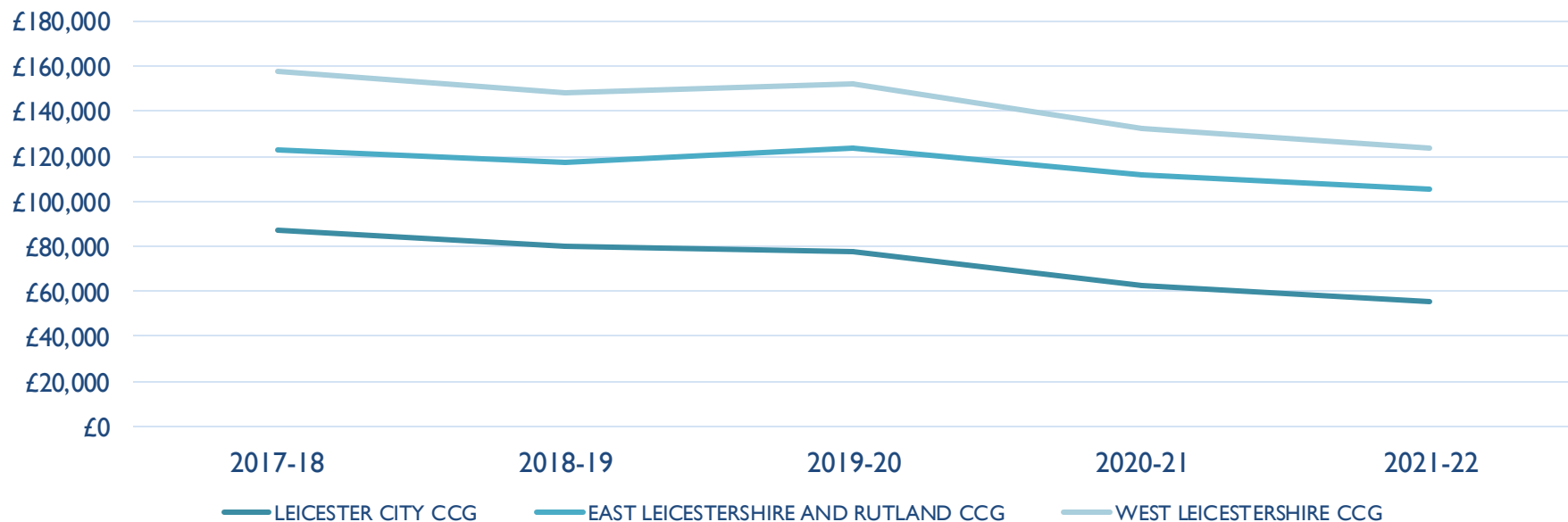
# Contraception provided by GPs

- As part of core provision GPs provide EHC and oral contraception to their patients .This is commissioned by NHS England .
- The graphs below show that there has been a reduction in contraceptive prescription costs and activity .
- Some of this activity will have moved to LA Commissioned sexual services



# Costs of oral contraception prescribed by GPs

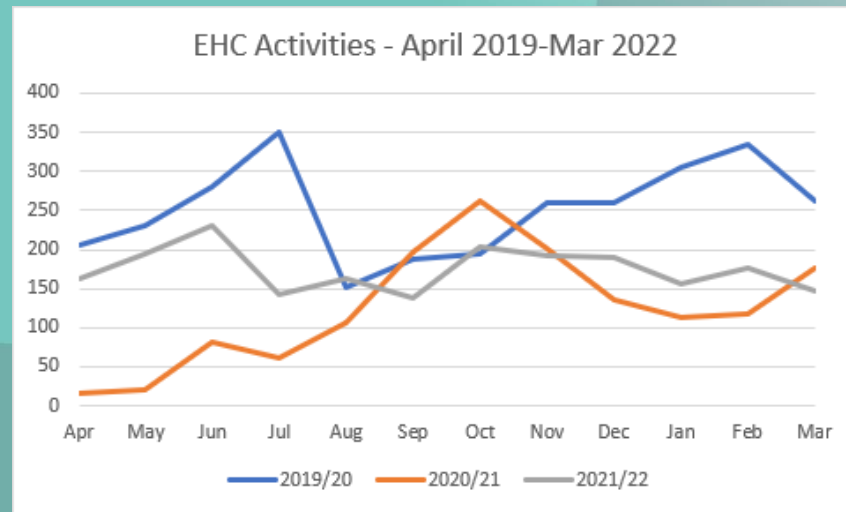
Cost of prescribed Oral Contraception in LLR CCGs, 2017-18 to 2020-21 (Epat data)



# GP and Pharmacy provided services (commissioned by LCC)

Summary of IUD/S		
Totals Year / quarter	The number of IUD/s fitted	The Number of Implants
2019/20	727	772
2020/21	1,061	552
21/22	2,355	1,569

LARC provided via GP practices had been showing some dramatic improvement in provision pre-covid and this has continued over the COVID period.



The trend follows the level of social COVID 19 restrictions that were in place in Leicester (i.e. much lower When there was no social mixing)

# EHC service review

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- We are currently reviewing the provision of EHC (Emergency Hormonal Contraception) across Leicester to determine whether the current provision meets the need of the population accessing this service
- The covid 19 pandemic has had an impact on the number of people accessing provision locally and the route by which they access EHC e.g. online, directly through sexual health clinic, GP and pharmacies
- There is need to have both online and in-person provision of EHC for service users to access, ensuring this is an equitable service for all
- The review of this service aims to address the balance shift that has taken place towards more online access, and to identify the best ways to address this within the current service model



# EHC public consultation

- A public survey was developed to understand the views of those likely to be using the service. A sample of the responses are:
- “The stigma that surrounds taking the pill can sometimes conflict with members of the community if they see you with it. That being said, the closer it is to accessing it the better for those who need it most, which I think is most important.”
- “I think there should be more education/awareness of EHC as many people do not even know what it is. I think it is important to make sure that people can access EHC discreetly too so everyone can feel safe and comfortable - ideally maybe you could order it online but collect it at a pharmacy?”
- “Improved awareness about availability of EHC and where its easiest to access”
- “Not everyone can order it online, some of us have strict parents who look through our mail.”



# Lessons learnt and considerations for future

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- Online services and telephone consultations are well used and safe , it is proposed that they will continue
- Some communities and age groups still prefer face to face services – more investigation required about times and days of week
- GP services commissioned by LA have been successful and the model put in place will be expanded
- Clinicians have worked hard to maintain services and quality despite issues with workforce and restrictions to delivery
- There are concerns about reduced prescribing in general practice that may be part of the cause of increases in contraceptive demand online
- Concerns about the decrease in young people accessing the service. It anticipated this will change when schools, colleges and universities return and communications are put in place to promote the services.
- The BAME project is ongoing looking at the specific needs of this community and working to improve access



# Emerging issues

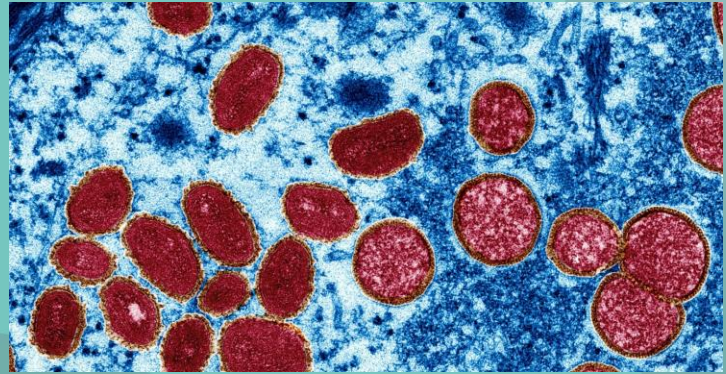
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- HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) – this is being provided by the SH service via face-to-face and online consultation. The PrEP offer is relatively new to the service (around a year) and uptake has been good. Numbers are still increasing.
- Monkeypox- see next slide



# Monkeypox

- Viral infection endemic to central and western Africa
- Previously only the odd imported case in the UK but there is currently a large worldwide outbreak involving 17 countries and counting
- There are now over 1000 cases in the UK but the overall risk to the public remains low
- Generally a mild illness and there have been no deaths associated with this outbreak
- Transmission of the virus is via direct or close physical contact with an infected person, close contact with the coughs or sneezes of a person with monkeypox, or contact with used clothing, bedding or towels from someone with monkeypox infection
- It is NOT a sexually transmitted infection, but can be transmitted during sex because of close contact
- Sexual Health Services have been at the forefront of managing this outbreak as many of the UK cases have been in bisexual men or men who have sex with men and transmitting via sexual networks



- The UKHSA is now recommending vaccination (using the smallpox vaccine) to certain at-risk groups and these are being delivered by our sexual health services.
- The Leicester Sexual Health Services have an effective telephone triage system in place to appropriately identify and treat possible cases

