

Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley (LSLBB) Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Strategy 2025-2030

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Executive summary

Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Bexley and Bromley (LSLBB), continue to face some of the greatest sexual health challenges in England. Reducing sexual and reproductive health inequalities is our priority. Sexual Health can impact an individual's emotional, physical and mental health, their economic means and social relationships. The effects of poor sexual and reproductive health are far reaching, and the impacts are made worse by social stigma and fear.

This **LSLBB Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Strategy 2025-2030 (LSLBB Strategy)** sets out our themes, priorities and the approach to meeting the sexual health needs of the five boroughs. This includes plans to respond to increasing rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), improve the reproductive health of our residents, and meet the London Mayors vision of 0-0-0: zero HIV-related stigma, zero HIV transmissions and zero HIV-related deaths. Since the publication of the previous [Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham \(LSL\) strategy \(2019-24\)](#), there have been some significant changes in the sexual health landscape. The financial climate for public services, and public health services in particular, remains extremely challenging. Following the Covid-19 pandemic we also, live, work and access services differently than we did before.

This strategy and linked action plans recognise that sexual health and wellbeing impact on and are affected by wider determinants of health. Social, economic and environmental issues shape daily life and affect people's health, so partnership working with all relevant organisations nationally, regionally and locally is crucial. This is the reason that we are committed to working in partnership across South East London (SEL), across our system. This will also ensure that the right actions are carried out for the right people, in the right place and at the right time. With reductions in public funding, and the challenges that presents, it is vital that we focus on reducing sexual health inequalities and provide accessible services to all. A strong evidence-base has informed this Strategy to tailor its approach to address the needs of LSLBB's population and is built around four main themes:

- **Theme one:** Healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships
- **Theme two:** Improving reproductive health
- **Theme three:** Reducing the rates of sexually transmitted infections
- **Theme four:** Preventing and living well with HIV

In 2024 the LSLBB came together to form a commissioning partnership (**LSLBB Partnership**) which is led by Lambeth Council. This strategy was developed in partnership by LSLBB's Public Health and Commissioning Teams. We have also incorporated public and stakeholder views on the strategy.

To help make this strategy work for people of all ages, we are focusing on using new ideas and technology to reduce health inequalities. The strategy also recognises that some groups are more affected by poor sexual and reproductive health. These include people under 25, gay and bisexual men, men who have sex with men (GBMSM), people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and other marginalised groups—like sex workers, people who are homeless, those with drug or alcohol problems, people with mental health issues or learning disabilities, and LGBTQ+ communities.

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Context

Current landscape

Within LSLBB, there are some of the highest rates of HIV and STIs in England. The most diagnosed STIs in England are chlamydia, gonorrhoea, genital herpes and genital warts. Over the last 10 years gonorrhoea and syphilis have increased nationally, and rates of gonorrhea have risen across all LSLBB boroughs.

Health inequalities persist, with the poorest sexual health seen in young people, GBMSM, black ethnic populations, and those in deprived areas. Socially disadvantaged or marginalised groups such as sex workers, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with learning disabilities, or those experiencing homelessness, who may already face poorer health outcomes, also experience barriers to sexual and reproductive health services.

Wider determinants of health

Sexual and reproductive health is influenced by various factors like lifestyle, environment, and access to healthcare. Other key factors include income, education, employment, cultural influences, discrimination, sexual orientation, gender, age, and ethnicity. These aspects affect how different communities access sexual health services and their health outcomes, leading to avoidable inequalities.

There is variation in need across the five boroughs which reflects the differences in our populations. Figure 1 shows the South East London region with a description of our borough's populations.

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Lambeth	Southwark	Lewisham	Bexley	Bromley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lambeth is home to approximately 320,000 residents and is the 4th most densely populated borough in London. Lambeth has a relatively young population - about 61 per cent of residents are under the age of 40. 43 per cent of Lambeth's population is Black, Asian or Multi-Ethnic and Lambeth has the 3rd largest Black/Black British community in England. It is estimated that 10 per cent of the Lambeth population identifies as LGBTQ+. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southwark is home to approximately 312,000 residents and is the 7th most densely populated borough in London. Southwark has a comparatively young population, with 41 per cent of the population aged 20 to 39. The median age in the borough is 33.4, seven years younger than the national median age. 49 per cent of Southwark's population is from a Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic background (compared with 51 per cent from a White ethnic background). It is estimated that eight per cent of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewisham is home to approximately 300,600 residents and is the 13th most densely populated borough in London. Lewisham has a young population bias and is set to continue to grow. 48.5 per cent of Lewisham's population is from a Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background (compared with 51.5 per cent from a White ethnic background). It is estimated that 6 per cent of the Lewisham population identifies as LGBTQ+. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021, Bexley had a population of 246,500. Between the 2021 and 2011 censuses, Bexley's population increased by about 14,500. residents (6.2 per cent). This rate of population growth is slower than the London average of 7.7 per cent and the national average of 6.6 per cent since the last census. The median age of Bexley residents is 39 years. This is higher than the median age in London (35 years) but lower than the median age in England (40 years). The most recent data from the 2021 census shows that one in four 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bromley is an outer London Borough, located in South East London (SEL) with a resident population of 329,994 according to the 2021 Census. Bromley has an older population than the London-wide average, with 18 per cent of the population being post-retirement age (65+). When compared to London, the population profile of Bromley is similar for children and young people up to the age of 19 years. London has a greater proportion of young adults aged 20-39 than Bromley, while Bromley has

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Lambeth	Southwark	Lewisham	Bexley	Bromley
	<p>the Southwark population identifies as LGBTQ+.</p>		<p>residents has an ethnic minority background.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bexley is the 9th least deprived London borough although some neighbourhoods rank in the 20 per cent most deprived in England. This means that there are large variations in sexual health outcomes across the population. 	<p>a greater proportion of people over 40 years of age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bromley has a similar ethnicity profile to the South-East of England; approximately 23.9 per cent of Bromley's population in 2021 are ethnic minority groups. The largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in Bromley is Black African. • According to the 2021 Census, an estimated 2.48 per cent of individuals identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

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Changing landscape

Since the publication of the LSL Strategy (2019-2024), there have been some significant changes in the sexual health landscape.

- The financial climate for public services, and public health services in particular, has not improved. Residents have also experienced changes in social and economic factors, such as increased levels of poverty leading to increased complexity of issues and needs
- Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the way sexual health services are provided has changed, along with people's expectations. There is now more demand for online services such as contraception and STI testing.
- There has been a strong movement recognising violence against women and girls and its link to unhealthy relationships. The topic of women's health has also gained momentum with the publication of the Women's Health Strategy for England.
- Changes in technology and social media have changed the way we access and receive information and have influenced social norms and sexual health behaviours.

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Content and purpose of the strategy

Why a sexual and reproductive health and HIV strategy is important for LSLBB

The provision of sexual health services is a statutory responsibility, and Local Authorities must commission sexual health services that are available to everyone and anyone. This includes free STI testing and treatment, partner notification of infected persons, advice on and reasonable access to a broad range of contraception. The LSLBB partnership manages services for Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV Prevention, HIV Care and Support, and Abortion. By working together, the partnership aims to deliver integrated, high-quality services while promoting innovation and ensuring cost-effectiveness across the South East London region.

Investing in sexual health

Investing in sexual health is a vital use of resources because it can lead to significant improvements in public health. Investing in sexual health services has demonstrated value for money and a substantial return on investment. A national study¹ has shown that every £1 spent on contraception services saves £9 across the public sector. This strategy highlights the importance of innovation and technology in addressing health inequalities and vulnerabilities across all ages. It focuses on prevention and targeted interventions for specific groups, such as those under 25, gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, and minority ethnic groups. By bringing together our priorities, the strategy aims to improve sexual and reproductive health and ensure cost-effectiveness across the South East London.

Why we need a joint strategy

Sexual Health services are open access, allowing residents to use them anywhere in England. To address health inequalities, innovation is key to ensuring everyone can access services and that we meet diverse local needs. A joint strategy will help provide integrated, high-quality services across the five boroughs. The collaborative approach allows for the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, leading to more effective and efficient service delivery. The strategy is designed to be complementary to other local policies and strategies, such as those addressing domestic abuse, substance use, education, and women's health. By working together, the boroughs can create action plans that reflect their unique circumstances while achieving shared goals and objectives.

What we want to achieve

We know that social, economic and environmental issues, shape daily life and affect people's general health. This, in turn, also has an impact on people's sexual health. This strategy and linked borough level action plans recognise this. Whilst this strategy focuses on priorities which are within the control of Local Authorities, we know that other stakeholders such as communities and the voluntary sector are play key roles in addressing the wider determinants of sexual and reproductive health. For this reason, we are committed to working in partnership across South East London (SEL) and our system. This will also ensure that the right actions are carried out for the right people, in the right place and at the right time. With challenges around reductions in public funding, it is vital that priorities focus on prevention, reducing sexual health inequalities and providing accessible services to all.

Our aim aligns with the vision outlined in the 2024 "A Blueprint for the future". [A blueprint for the future: Sexual and reproductive health and HIV services in England | Local Government Association](#), together the five boroughs are committed to improving outcomes and reducing inequalities in sexual health, reproductive health and HIV for all our communities.

¹ [Contraception: Economic Analysis Estimation of the Return on Investment for publicly funded contraception in England](#), Public Health England, June 2018

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Realising a joint vision for Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley

Our key priorities for maximising sexual and reproductive health for all people in our boroughs remain the same as in the previous LSL strategy, these are:

	VISION	AIMS & OUTCOMES	WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO
Theme 1 Healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships	<p>People are empowered to make their sexual relationships healthy and fulfilling.</p>	<p>Our aim is to empower and enable individuals and communities to build safe, informed, healthy, consensual, and fulfilling sexual relationships. We want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSLBB residents to have increased confidence, skills and ability to build healthy sexual relationships. • Make sure people in unhealthy or risky sexual relationships are supported appropriately. • LSLBB residents to have increased knowledge and understanding of healthy sexual behaviours and SRH services. • All relevant services to deliver positively framed and inclusive sexual health education, information, and access to services in ways that are considerate of diverse experiences, concerns and needs. • To reduce stigma and discrimination related to sexual health and sexual relationships. 	<p>Our SRH services will aim to promote respect, reduce stigma, enhance communication skills, support informed decision-making, and foster positive attitudes towards sexual health.</p> <p>We will work with other services to provide holistic support to people in unhealthy or risky sexual relationships.</p> <p>We will increase knowledge, awareness and confidence around building healthy relationships in our community.</p> <p>We will work with partners to improve the delivery, reach, and quality of RSHE and aim to collect data on its coverage and effectiveness.</p>

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	VISION	AIMS & OUTCOMES	WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO
Theme 2 Improving reproductive health	People effectively manage their reproductive health, understand what impacts it and have knowledge of and access to contraception	We want: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure people can make informed reproductive health decisions, that they understand what impacts their reproductive health and have knowledge of and access to contraceptives. This will lead to healthier outcomes and improved well-being for all. LSLBB residents to have increased knowledge and understanding of reproductive health and how to access women's health services. All LSLBB's residents to have visible, accessible, comprehensive contraceptive services including services for young people. To increase collection of reproductive health data to support evidence-based decision making. Reduce unwanted pregnancies and repeat abortions. 	We will increase access to the full range of contraception methods, including LARC and emergency contraception, in both primary care and SRH services. We will strengthen the offer of contraception post-pregnancy including easy booking of LARC. We will improve access to contraception and sexual health advice post-abortion. We will proactively offer ongoing contraception through existing services, wherever emergency contraception is available. We will improve access to comprehensive information about contraception that is easy to understand. We will provide free condoms where appropriate, such as in SRH clinics.
Theme 3 Reducing the Rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	The local burden of STIs is reduced, especially among those who are disproportionately affected.	Our aim is to focus our STI prevention efforts on reducing adverse health outcomes and addressing inequalities. We want:	We will work together to deliver a range of interventions to achieve our ambitions, some of the programmes will be delivered together as LSLBB and

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	VISION	AIMS & OUTCOMES	WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure poor sexual health is reduced in LSLBB residents who are disproportionately affected by poor sexual health. Transmission of STI and repeat infections to reduce Prompt, equitable, accessible, and high-quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> testing, treatment, vaccination, and partner notification. 	<p>some will be delivered by individual boroughs based on local need.</p> <p>We will target STI education and testing services to people with the highest need by providing services in the community.</p> <p>We will provide access to free condoms to those that need them.</p> <p>We will strengthen partner notification for STIs.</p> <p>We will offer everyone who needs it access to timely testing and medicines to prevent or treat STIs from multiple places, including online.</p> <p>We will offer accurate information on STI prevention to those who need it when they need it, where they need it.</p>
Theme 4 Preventing and living well with HIV	<p>We move towards achievement of 0–0–0: zero HIV-related stigma, zero HIV transmissions and zero HIV-related deaths</p> <p>Underpinning each of the four themes that run throughout the strategy are five key principles</p>	<p>We want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve zero new diagnoses, zero HIV-related stigma and zero deaths related to HIV. This means focusing on preventing HIV transmission, achieving early HIV diagnosis and ensuring that people living with HIV can access local support to enable them to live healthy and fulfilling lives. 	<p>We will work with our partners to reduce HIV stigma across different settings, including primary care, community settings and sexual health clinics.</p> <p>We will work with partners to reduce inequalities by increasing HIV testing and improving knowledge and access of PrEP amongst groups with a higher risk of HIV.</p>

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	VISION	AIMS & OUTCOMES	WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people taking PrEP to reduce HIV transmissions. • Increase the number of people using condoms to reduce HIV transmission. • Improve people's knowledge of HIV so they can manage their HIV risk. • Increase the number of people being regularly tested for HIV in a range of settings to identify people living with HIV, reduce late diagnosis and prevent HIV transmission. • Ensure people living with HIV are supported to access prompt HIV treatment. • Reduce HIV stigma amongst residents and healthcare staff. • Maintain the availability of STI and HIV online tests. 	<p>We will work with our residents at a higher risk of HIV to deliver targeted HIV testing and prevention services.</p> <p>We will gain a better understanding of barriers to testing to reduce late HIV diagnosis.</p> <p>We will improve HIV knowledge and increase training for health care professionals.</p> <p>We will continue to support people living with HIV to live well.</p>

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Governance

How the strategy will be managed

The **Southeast London Sexual Health Improvement and Innovation Steering Group (SHIISG)** will oversee the delivery of this strategy. This group includes representatives from the five local councils, sexual health service providers, primary care, and community organisations.

The **SHIISG** will track progress, identify risks and challenges, and report to the **LSLBB Commissioning Board**. The Board includes commissioners and public health team members from the five councils, a representative from the Southeast Integrated Care Board (ICB), and a finance manager.

Action plan and local adaption

A clear action plan will guide the delivery of the strategy. Each borough will have its own version to reflect local needs, ensuring tailored approaches where necessary.

The **SHIISG** will regularly review progress using agreed measures and work with existing groups like the **Clinical Advisory Group**. When needed, smaller **task and finish groups** will be set up to focus on specific areas of the strategy.

Monitoring and accountability

We will use several different measures to understand our progress. Examples of how we will measure progress against each of the four themes is outlined below. The monitoring and accountability for the strategy will follow each borough's governance processes. This structure ensures clear oversight, local flexibility, and transparency in delivering high-quality sexual health services across South East London.

Healthy relationships	Good reproductive health	Reducing the rate of sexually transmitted infections	Preventing and living well with HIV
Awareness of local sexual health services	Rate of prescribed LARC	Rates of gonorrhoea and other sexually transmitted infections	Uptake of PrEP
Number of referrals to other services	Percentage of subsequent abortions in under 25s	STI testing rates	HIV testing rates in non-typical settings

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