

Subject:	Sussex SARC (Sexual Abuse Referral Centre): Plans to Re-commission		
Date of Meeting:	13 October 2021		
Report of:	Executive Lead, Strategy, Governance & Law		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 SARCs (sexual assault referral centres) are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. SARCs are jointly commissioned and funded by NHS England (NHSE) and by the local police service/Police & Crime Commissioner.
- 1.2 NHSE is currently re-commissioning SSRC services across south East England, and is presenting its plans for the Sussex SARC to the HOSC for information.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members note the contents of this report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 SARCs are specialist centres providing a range of services for people of all ages who have been raped or sexually assaulted. These services include the gathering of forensic evidence, but also support and advice. The current SARC contracts are coming to an end, and there are no further opportunities for contract extension. Commissioners consequently need to procure a new provider, with a contract commencement date of October 2022.
- 3.2 In Sussex, there are currently two SARCs: a SARC in Brighton (Brighton General Hospital site) which provides under 14 services, and a SARC in Crawley for over 14s and adults. The Brighton SARC contract is held by Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust (SCFT); and the Crawley contract by Mountain Healthcare, an independent provider that manages a number of SARCs nationally.
- 3.3 SARCs are specialist services, dealing intensively with relatively low numbers of referrals, particularly for the under 14 service which deals with only 10-15 forensic referrals a year. The over 14 services is considerably busier, with 30-40 forensic referrals per month.

- 3.4 Commissioners have identified a best practice SARC model as a single site offering services for all ages. This has benefits in terms of the recruitment and retention of workforce and in terms of estates investment. The latter is important, as there are increasingly stringent accreditation demands on forensic evidence-gathering by SARCs, which will require additional estates investment. This would be more straightforward with a single site model.
- 3.5 Commissioners are, in consequence, proposing to adopt a single-site model for Sussex, with Crawley as the all-age SARC. Crawley is much the busier of the two current SARCs, and the future viability of the Brighton SARC site is in any case uncertain given plans to redevelop the Brighton General Hospital site.
- 3.6 Moving to a single-site SARC model will result in increased travel times for some Sussex residents needing to access SARC services, e.g. people living in or near to Brighton & Hove. Commissioners calculate that the overall impact on travel times will be neutral as longer travel times for some Sussex residents will be balanced out by shorter journeys for others. The number of people negatively affected will be very small, as there are very few referrals to the under 14 service; and the impact will not be very significant as Crawley is relatively close to Brighton & Hove. NHSE has confirmed that people travelling from Brighton & Hove to the SARC can have their travel costs reimbursed.
- 3.7 Commissioners regard these plans as having a low level impact on service users, for the reasons outlined above. NHSE has been consulting on its plans, with the four week consultation due to end on 8th October 2021. A wide range of stakeholders, partners and service users have been consulted. 85 responses have been received to date with no objections to the all-age SARC. A full analysis report on consultation is due on 13th October 2021.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Not relevant to the report to note.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 NHSE has consulted a wide range of stakeholders on its SARC re-commissioning plans. See point 3.7 above.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Members are asked to note NHSE plans to re-commission Sussex SARCs as a single-site all age service based in Crawley.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Not relevant to this report for information

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 There are no legal implications to this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 01/09/21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 NHSE has undertaken an EIA and a health needs assessment (HNA), both of which have informed the development of re-commissioning plans.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Plans to move to a single-site SARC model for Sussex may marginally increase travel times, and potentially carbon emissions, for residents of Brighton & Hove. However, the impact will not be significant as it involves very few journeys. NHSE commissioners have calculated that the overall impact on travel times will be neutral (with shorter journeys for some East and West Sussex residents balancing out the longer journeys for people resident in coastal areas).

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 Health services have longstanding issues with workforce retention and recruitment, which may be exacerbated by the loss of some EU nationals due to Brexit. Commissioners believe that adopting a single-site SARC in Sussex will make workforce management easier than with the existing two site model.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 The proposed adoption of a single-site SARC model will best enable investment in SARC services to ensure that forensic evidence collection meets accreditation standards and is consequently of maximum value in court proceedings.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. SARC procurement timeline.

