

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee

Integrated sexual health services in Reading
Overview of local data and commissioning
arrangements

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Integrated sexual health services in Reading

Overview of local data and commissioning arrangements

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Background and purpose of report

- The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) published a spotlight report in June 2023 on sexually transmitted infections (STI) in the South East region.
- Using 2021 data the report noted that while overall infections rates are lower in the South East than the national average some localities, including Reading, were reporting infection rates above the national average.
- These slides, and the accompanying report, aim to provide analysis of local STI diagnoses trends, an overview of the commissioning arrangements for the integrated sexual health service in Reading, the performance management processes, and the broader safe sexual health promotional and educational activity in place to monitor and manage service delivery and local STIs.

Sexual health service commissioning in England

Local Authorities commission:	Integrated Care Boards commission:	NHS England commission:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive sexual health services including most contraceptive services and all prescribing costs, but excluding GP additionally provided contraception • STI testing and treatment, chlamydia screening and HIV testing • specialist services, including young people's sexual health, teenage pregnancy services, outreach, HIV prevention, sexual health promotion, services in schools, college and pharmacies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most abortion services • sterilisation • vasectomy • non-sexual-health elements of psychosexual health services • gynaecology including any use of contraception for non-contraceptive purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contraception provided as an additional service under the GP contract • HIV treatment and care (including drug costs for post-exposure prophylaxis following sexual exposure (PEPSE)) • promotion of opportunistic testing and treatment for STIs and patient-requested testing by GPs • sexual health elements of prison health services • sexual assault referral centres • cervical screening • specialist foetal medicine services

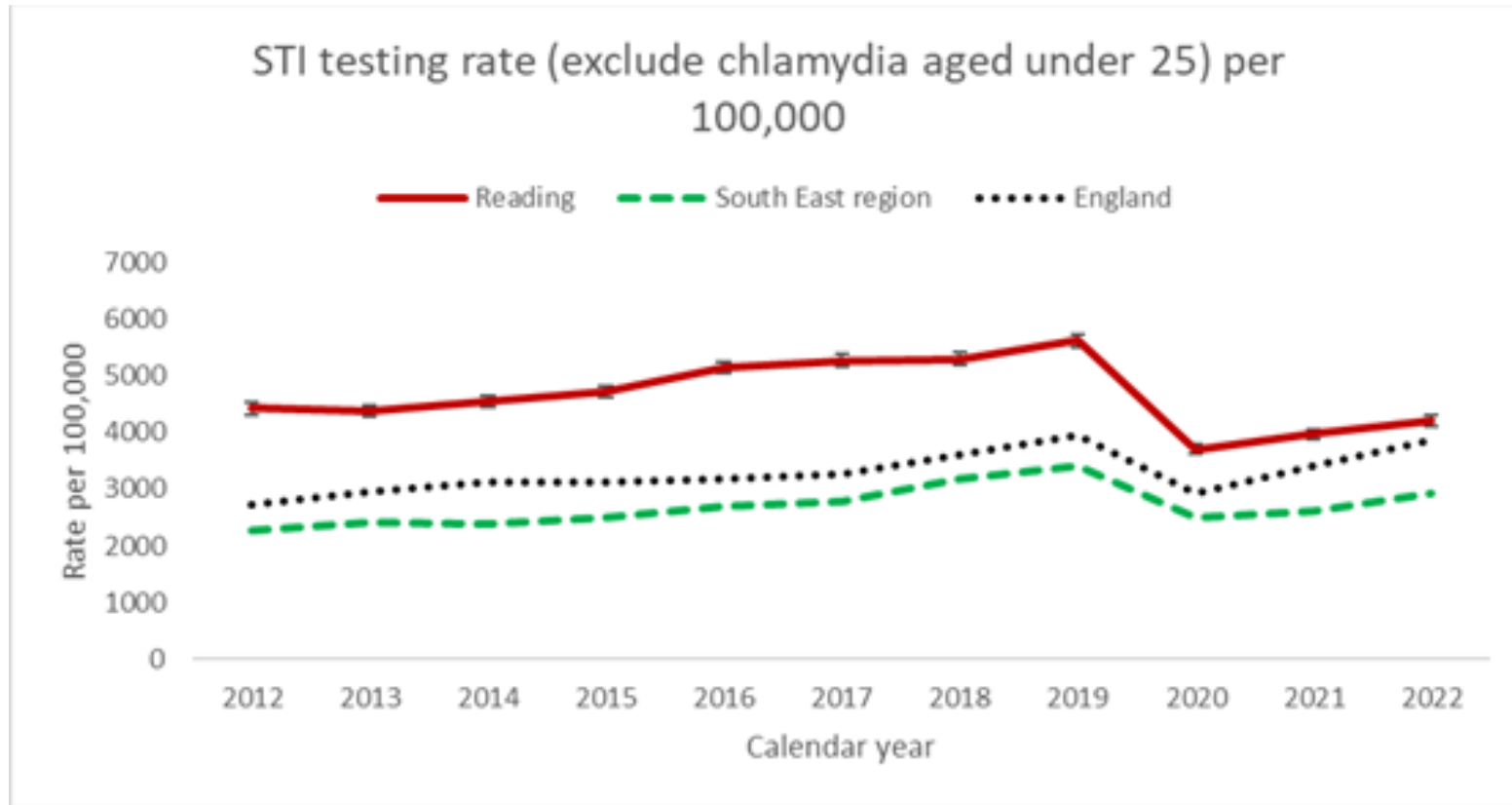
The local integrated sexual health service

- Service provided by Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust (RBFT)
- The service is joint funded by the 3 Local Authorities of Berkshire West, with Reading acting as lead commissioner
- The contract was awarded to RBFT following a competitive tender in 2020 and can run for a maximum of 10 years
- Contract value - £2.56m per annum (Reading contribution of £1.4m)

The service provides -

- Timely screening and STI testing, through face to face and online services, results notification, diagnosis and treatment for STIs and testing and diagnosis of HIV
- An emphasis on rapid access for vulnerable groups, those at increased risk and people presenting with urgent priority conditions
- Routine offers of HIV and/or syphilis testing where at risk and testing where clinically indicated or requested through self-care and self-sampling pathways.
- Testing for viral hepatitis B and C for high-risk groups
- Immediate treatment of uncomplicated infections in index patients and their contactable contacts.
- Rapid and confidential contact tracing/partner notification where an infection has been diagnosed or confirmed.
- Support to service users with a diagnosed infection to understand its importance and fully engage in Partner Notification.
- Promotion and delivery of vaccination (including for hepatitis B, A and HPV)

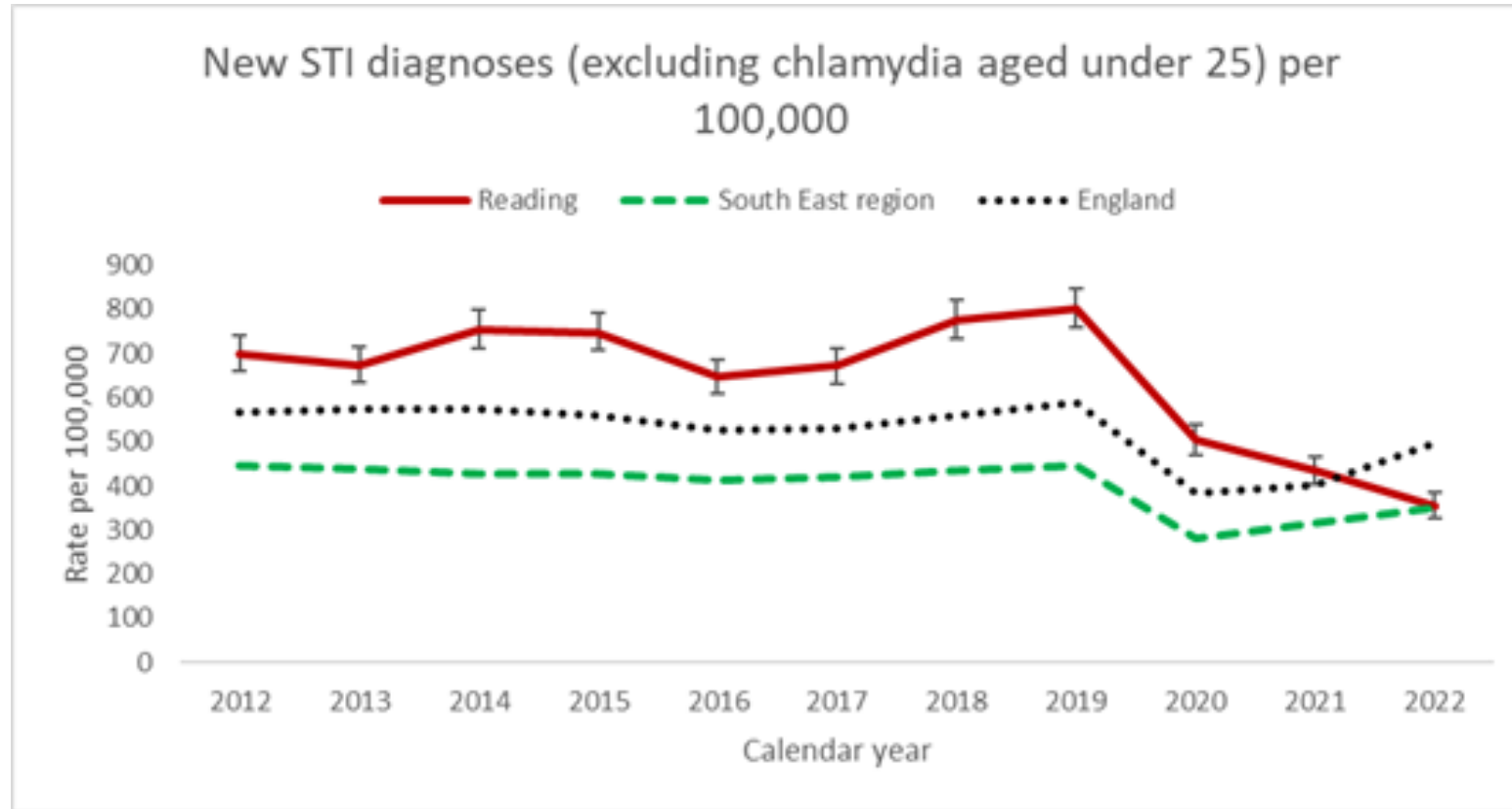
Local STI data



- Figure 1 shows the STI testing rate amongst people accessing sexual health services, resident in Reading plotted against the averages for England and the Southeast region.
- The pre-pandemic testing rate for STIs in Reading was significantly above Regional and National averages and was increasing year on year.
- Following the pandemic, testing rates in Reading have not rebounded to the same degree as the England rate.
- STI testing in Reading in 2022 is at about 75% of the level seen in 2019, compared to 97% of 2019 level in 2022 in England.

**Data from the Genitourinary Medicine Clinic Activity Data Set (GUMCAD) STI Surveillance System*

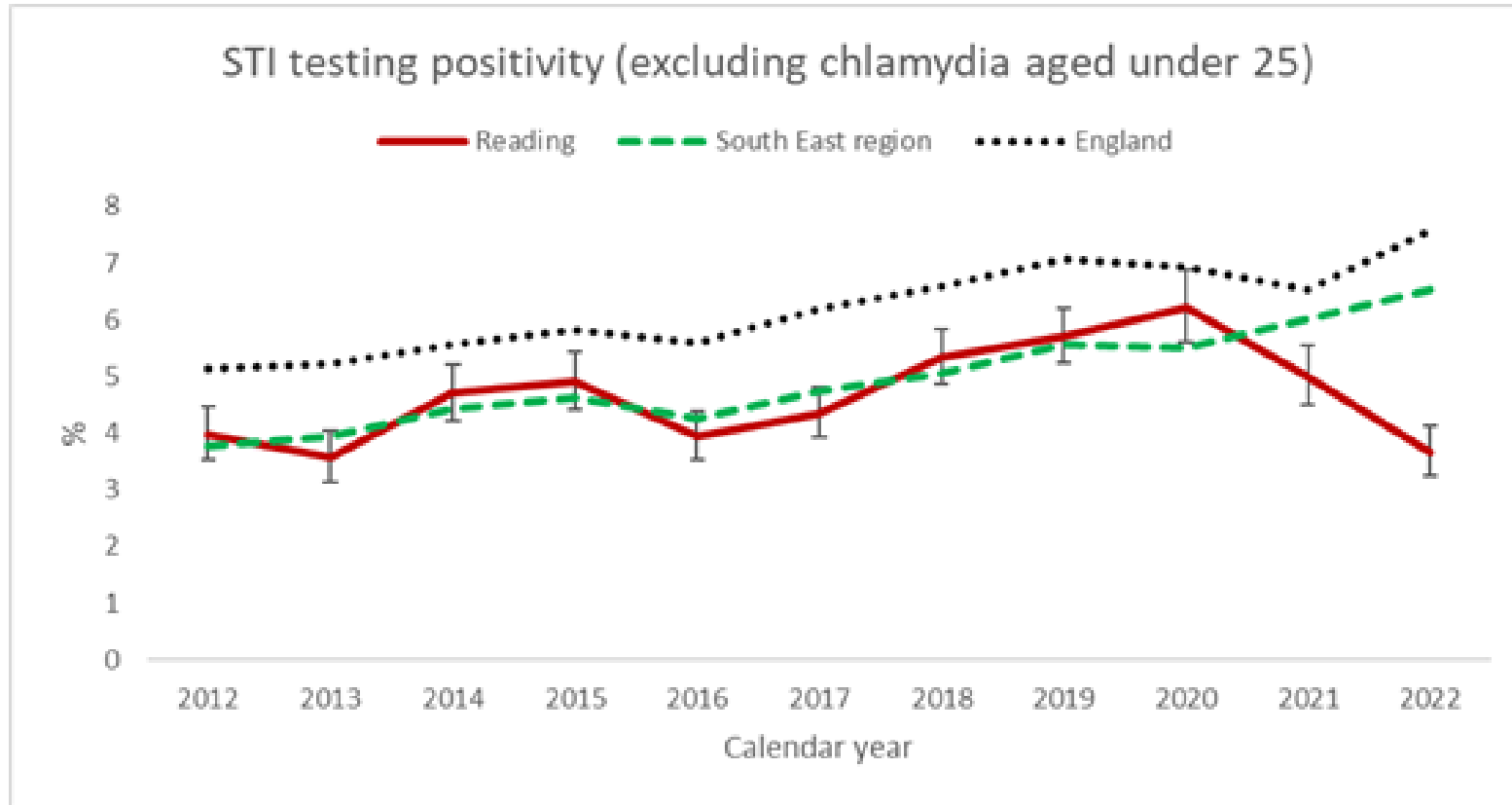
Local STI data



- Historically, the new STI diagnosis rate in Reading was significantly higher than the England and Southeast region average.
- Similarly, to the national pattern, it dropped dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- However, in Reading this decrease continues into 2021 and 2022 contrary to the increase seen on average in England. 2022 is the first year in an 11-year period where STI diagnosis rate in Reading are below England averages
- This pattern in overall diagnosis is similar to the diagnosis rates for chlamydia, and gonorrhoea in Reading: an initial drop in diagnosis rates in 2020 which has continued into 2021 and 2022.
- This can be contrasted to the increase in cases in England seen between 2021 and 2022 including the sharp uptick in gonorrhoea diagnosis rates.
- Numbers of syphilis diagnoses are too small to say if any decrease is statistically significant. However, in Reading rates fell between 2020 and 2022 in contrast to an increase seen on average across England.

**Data from the Genitourinary Medicine Clinic Activity Data Set (GUMCAD) STI Surveillance System*

Local STI data



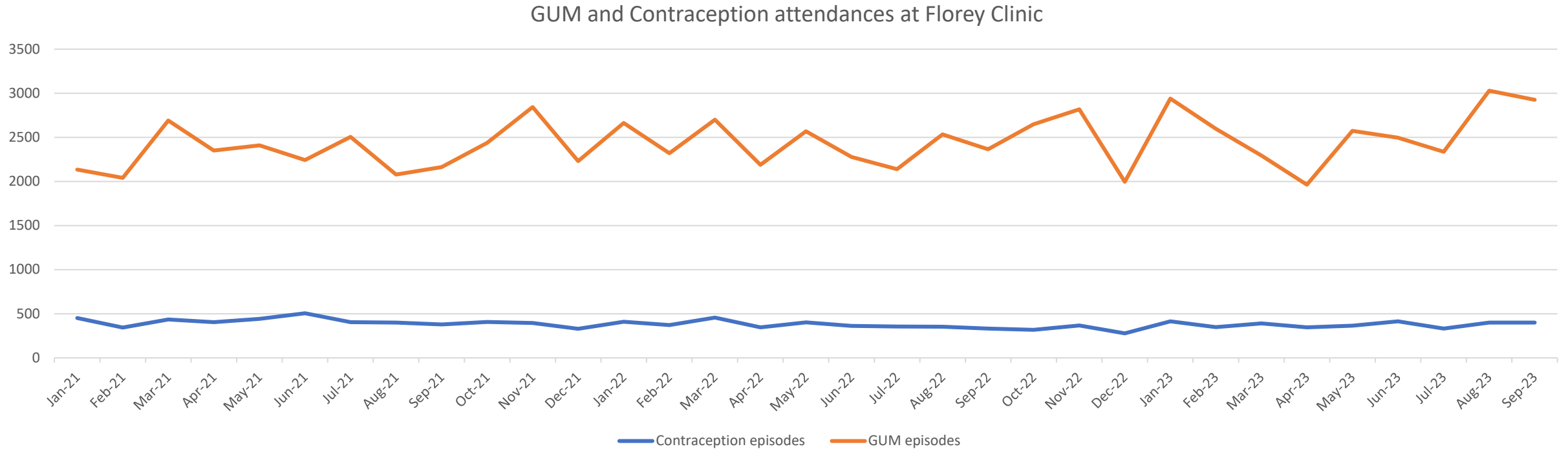
- Figure 3 shows positive tests as a percentage of those people receiving a test.
- This shows that the decrease in diagnosis rate in Reading has been accompanied by a decrease in percent positivity; tests taken in 2022 are less likely to return a positive result than those taken in 2019.
- The opposite pattern is seen in the Southeast and England.
- This could support a conclusion that the decreasing STI rates seen in Reading are not due to a slower rate of return to pre-pandemic total testing rates.
- However, it could indicate that testing is not targeted as effectively in Reading as it is elsewhere.
- Finally, it could indicate a lower rate of underlying community transmission.

**Data from the Genitourinary Medicine Clinic Activity Data Set (GUMCAD) STI Surveillance System*

Florey Clinic



- Attendances were maintained during the pandemic.



Changes to contraception access in March 2022 meant that service users were not having to access service twice to access contraception (to discuss with clinician on the phone and then attend clinic in person). We expected a drop at this point however our numbers have remained consistent meaning that we are seeing more people with the same number of attendances.

Florey Clinic



- A post pandemic world has meant that the clinic has had to responded to service user feedback to how users would like to access the service.
- Florey Clinic has established additional funding streams for testing for groups of service users.
- Improvements of data submissions and join working on KPI with commissioner teams.
- Promotion of service to other services and populations who are at higher risk of sexually transmitted infections.
- Outreach work, outreach nurses, to target specific populations and vulnerable adults and youth services.
- Working with police and social work and improvement in relationships and thought of sexual health services for young people who are at risk of exploitation.
- Continue to work with other departments within Royal Berkshire Hospital and service teams to improve opportunistic testing for sexually transmitted infections and education surrounding testing.

GUMCAD/STI data conclusions

- STI testing rates and diagnoses dropped sharply between 2019 and 2020 reflecting the reduction in service access resulting from COVID-19 restrictions.
- Although STI testing rates in Reading have rebounded since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions they remain in 2022 at 75% of the level seen in 2019. This is in some contrast to the return to 2019 levels seen on average across England.
- A lesser return to pre-pandemic testing rates in Reading has also been accompanied by a decrease in STI diagnosis rates beyond the initial sharp drop between 2019 and 2020, continuing steadily in 2021 and 2022. Again, this differs from the national picture which is showing an increase in STI diagnosis rates between 2021 and 2022.
- Of note, national cases of gonorrhoea and syphilis have risen above pre-pandemic levels. This also differs in Reading where rates of these diagnoses have steadily declined between 2020 and 2022 with cases of gonorrhoea showing a statistically significantly decreasing trend.
- Decreases in diagnoses could be due to a decrease in effective testing and identification or a lower rate of community transmission.
- Percent positivity data would seem to eliminate the possibility that the decrease in diagnosis in Reading is due to a slower return to pre-pandemic total testing rates. However, alongside the possibility of a lower rate of community transmission, there remains the possibility that decreasing diagnosis rates are due to less effective targeting of testing.

General conclusions

- Reading is seeing an increase in overall positive STI diagnoses. The extent of the increase is currently less severe than that seen nationally, however. And Reading is stills seeing a year-on-year reduction in new diagnoses for specific infections – chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis
- This smaller increase in positive STI rates should not be downplayed, however, and ongoing monitoring and review should be maintained to keep watch on any continued rise in overall STI rates.
- There are well established monitoring processes in place that allow both the service provider and public health commissioners to regularly keep track of local STI data.
- These processes are being further strengthened by joint work between the commissioners and provider on a more robust activity data dashboard
- The work of the integrated sexual health service will also continue to be supported via the wider safe sex educational campaigns and activity commissioned by the local public health teams.
- Work also continues with the service provider to assess and ensure the longer-term sustainability of the service in the face of increasing activity and cost pressures.