

ELECTIVE (SSC5a) REPORT (1200 words)

A report that addresses the above four objectives should be written below. Your Elective supervisor will assess this.

All data points have been taken from the Fingertips – Hackney page (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2020) or the Summary Profile (UK Health Security Agency, 2022) unless otherwise referenced.

Describe the patterns of sexually transmitted infections and HIV in Hackney and contrast this with the rest of the UK.

Sexual health

Hackney sees higher rates of all sexually transmitted infections than the national averages, according to the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID)'s Fingertips data from 2020 (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2020). That year, Hackney had over 3.5 times more new STI diagnoses than England, excluding chlamydia diagnoses. This placed them as the 4th highest borough for new STI diagnoses in London. For example, Hackney saw 5 times as many gonorrhoea and syphilis diagnoses in 2020 than the national average. The UK Health Security Agency report states "this reflects high levels of risky sexual behaviour" (UK Health Security Agency, 2022). The diagnosis rate of chlamydia was three times as high as England.

Examples of "risky sexual behaviour" include not using barrier contraception such as condoms; having multiple overlapping sexual partners; using drugs during sex such as during chemsex; anal sex without barrier contraception or sufficient lubricant; and sex work or having sex with someone who is a sex worker.

HIV

HIV is also more prevalent in Hackney compared to England. The prevalence of HIV (of diagnosed individuals) in 2020 was 6.39 per 1,000, compared to 2.31 per 1,000 in England. There were 13.2 per 100,000 new diagnoses in Hackney that year, compared to 5.7 per 100,000 in England.

Describe the service provision of STI treatment, contraception, terminations, HIV healthcare and psychosexual counselling in Hackney and discuss this in the context of UK and global services.

At the Clifden Centre, generic 'GUM clinics' saw patients with a huge variety of complaints. These included but weren't limited to: STI diagnosis and treatment, contraception discussions, contraceptive implant insertions, PrEP, emergency contraception, psychosexual or social issues, menopausal symptoms; and minor procedures such as Depo injections, vaccinations and wart cautery. There were also specific clinics for implant and coil insertions; psychosexual discussions and HIV outpatient care. The termination care was in a separate part of the hospital.

Chlamydia detection

The detection rate of chlamydia amongst 15-24 year olds in Hackney is significantly higher than the England average, at 3,071 per 100,000 compared to 1,408 per 100,000. A high detection rate “reflects success” as it signifies that asymptomatic infections are being detected and treated (Public Health England, 2021). This reduces the chance of reproductive health complications, which are especially detrimental among cis women, trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are of reproductive age and have not had a hysterectomy.

Terminations

The total abortion rate in Hackney is higher than that of England. Per 100,000 of 15-44 year olds, there were 22 abortions in Hackney and 18.9 in England in 2020. One key abortion figure is the proportion of abortions amongst under-25s that are repeat abortions. The figure for Hackney is 33.7% whereas it is 29.2% for England. These figures “may be indicators of lack of access to good quality contraception services and advice” (Public Health England, 2021).

Hackney’s proportion of (NHS funded) abortions occurring before 10 weeks gestation was 90% in 2020, better than England’s proportion of 88.1%. Early abortions have fewer complications and are more cost-effective. Therefore, this figure is “an indicator of service quality” (Public Health England, 2021).

Contraception

England, and therefore Hackney, has access to a wide range of contraceptive options (Family Planning Association, 2022). All options are free on the NHS, with condoms being available for free at many different locations. Emergency contraception is available free from sexual health clinics and from some pharmacies.

I was most impressed by the LARC clinic at the Clifden Centre. The routine use of local anaesthetic injections (para-cervical and intra-cervical blocks) during coil-insertions transformed a procedure that can be incredibly painful and traumatising for patients into one with much more dignity and comfort. Each appointment also had a chaperone to help the doctor/nurse carrying out the procedure but also to support the patient. It’s hard to describe how different this was to my own experience and the experience of people I know. Despite this, the total number of LARCs prescribed (excluding injections) is actually quite a bit lower in Hackney than the England average. This “is likely to reflect local geography and service models” (UK Health Security Agency, 2022) as LARC provision is often higher in less urban areas.

The conception rate amongst under-18s is lower in Hackney than England. This may reflect influences such as good sex education in schools or successful contraception initiatives. The proportion of conceptions amongst under-18s that lead to termination is much higher in Hackney, at 70.5%, compared to 53% in England. My guesses would be that this could reflect both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ things: such as the success of Hackney’s termination services, with better access and therefore more women being able to make full reproductive choices; Hackney having more liberal social and cultural views around termination; or young residents of Hackney having a higher proportion of unplanned pregnancies.

HIV

Globally, HIV treatment and therefore prognoses, are improving. According to WHO, 187 countries have adopted their recommendation that those living with HIV take lifelong anti-retroviral therapy (ART) regardless of CD4 count, covering 99% of the world's population with HIV (World Health Organisation, 2021). At the end of 2020, they estimated that the global ART coverage of adults was 73% but that the coverage of children and adolescents was only 54%.

Hackney has a similar proportion of patients accessing HIV care taking anti-retroviral medications (ART) to England, at 99.1% and 98.7% respectively. However, fewer patients in Hackney are considered to be 'virally suppressed', at 95% compared to 97.45% in England. At Homerton Hospital, patients attended outpatient appointments in the Jonathan Mann Clinic, where they had various routine tests (viral load, CD4 count, urea, creatinine, height, weight, blood pressure), usually at 6-monthly or yearly intervals.

Explore how public health strategies, campaigns and funding impact on HIV and sexual health services in Hackney and the UK.

To examine how public health officials approach HIV in Hackney and London, we have to look at a few national and global initiatives, which are then locally implemented to reflect the specific needs of the city/borough. For the purposes of this report, I will touch on several different strategies but will not explore any in detail.

HIV

London is part of Fast Track Cities, a global initiative to tackle HIV. Fast Track Cities aims that, by 2030, 95% of people with HIV in high income countries know they have HIV; 95% of those living with HIV are on treatment; and 95% of those on treatment are virally suppressed. This is the 95-95-95 target (UNAIDS, 2015). One of the key organisations spearheading this, UNAIDS, are also campaigning against HIV-related stigma. One way they are trying to do this is by establishing a 'Global Partnership' to end discrimination, where countries work together to spread awareness of modern HIV treatment and prognoses.

The HIV Action Plan for England, 'Towards Zero', was published in December 2021 by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC, 2021), as part of the (upcoming) wider Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy. This was in response to recommendations from the Independent HIV Commission (HIV Commission, 2022) and subsequently the HIV Oversight Group (DHSC, 2021). This plan lays out how the English government aims to end new HIV diagnoses by 2030. It includes actions to increase HIV testing; increase uptake of PrEP; decrease the time from diagnosis to treatment; and reduce HIV-related stigma.

Sexual health

As aforementioned, Hackney has a significantly higher chlamydia detection rate than the England average. This could reflect the success of their implementation of the National Chlamydia Screening Programme (NCSP). The NCSP changed focus in 2021 to focus on women of reproductive age (including trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are of reproductive age and have not had a hysterectomy), due to the serious reproductive

complications of untreated chlamydia. In practice, this involves opportunistic testing of anyone with female reproductive organs when they present in community settings such as GP surgeries, pharmacies and sexual health clinics.

Due to high rates of conception amongst under 18s, a national strategy was commenced called the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1999. This was an area of focus as “babies born to mothers under 20 years consistently have a higher rate of stillbirth, infant mortality and low birthweight than average” (UK Health Security Agency, 2022). The strategy, mainly involving sex education and improving contraceptive access, led to a reduction in the under-18 conception rate by 66.3% between 1998 and 2019. Similarly, Hackney has seen a significant drop in the under-18 conception rate, dropping from around 75 per 1,000 in 1998 to 15 per 1,000 in 2019. The World Health Organisation then sought to share the strategy globally (Hadley, et al., 2016).

Observe the role of a sexual health/HIV doctor and explore my own career aspirations. Consider the two training pathways of Community Sexual and Reproductive Health and Genitourinary Medicine and which I would better suit. Gain experience in both clinical sexual health and population/public health.

The doctors working in the Clifden Centre ranged from Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) trainees/consultants, to Community Sexual and Reproductive Health (CSRH) trainees/consultants, to sexual health ‘specialist doctors’, to GPs. The termination services were lead by Obstetrics and Gynaecology consultants.

Both GUM and CSRH allow for expertise in sexual health but with differing other focuses. For example, GUM involves both HIV and general medicine expertise. In contrast, CSRH has a stronger focus on complex contraception, terminations and medical gynaecology. I enjoy all of these so the decision is very hard!

I hadn’t encountered ‘specialty doctors’ (or trust grade doctors) before so this is an intriguing option. However, this route seems tough as without a formal training programme, getting opportunities and eventually becoming a consultant seems more complex.

These are dilemmas I have yet to solve! I hope they will become clear as I progress in my career.

Works cited

DHSC, 2021. *The Oversight Group for development of the HIV Action Plan*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-oversight-group-for-development-of-the-hiv-action-plan> [Accessed 21 April 2022].

DHSC, 2021. *Towards Zero - An action plan towards ending HIV transmission, AIDS and HIV-related deaths in England - 2022 to 2025*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-zero-the-hiv-action-plan-for-england-2022-to-2025/towards-zero-an-action-plan-towards-ending-hiv-transmission-aids-and-hiv-related-deaths-in-england-2022-to-2025>

[Accessed 13 April 2022].

Family Planning Association, 2022. *Which method of contraception is right for me?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.sexwise.org.uk/contraception/which-method-contraception-right-me>

Hadley, A., Chandra-Mouli, V. & Ingham, R., 2016. Implementing the United Kingdom Government’s 10-Year Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for England (1999-2010): Applicable Lessons for Other Countries.. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, May.59(1).

HIV Commission, 2022. *HIV Commission*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.hivcommission.org.uk/>

[Accessed 21 April 2022].

NICE, 2016. *HIV testing: increasing uptake among people who may have undiagnosed HIV*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng60>
[Accessed 13 April 2022].

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2020. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles*. [Online]
Available at:
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/sexualhealth/data#page/1/gid/8000057/pat/6/ati/202/are/E09000012/iid/90742/age/1/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>
[Accessed 21 May 2022].

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2020. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles*. [Online]
Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/sexualhealth/data#page/1>

Public Health England, 2021. *Changes to the National Chlamydia Screening Programme*, s.l.: s.n.

Terrence Higgins Trust, 2022. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.hivpreventionengland.org.uk/>
[Accessed 13 April 2022].

Terrence Higgins Trust, 2022. *It Starts With Me*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.startswithme.org.uk/>
[Accessed 21 April 2022].

UK Health Security Agency, 2022. *Summary profile of local authority sexual health - Hackney*. [Online]
Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/static-reports/sexualhealth-reports/2022/E09000012.html?area-name=Hackney>
[Accessed 21 May 2022].

UK Health Security Agency, 2022. *Summary profile of local authority sexual health: Tower Hamlets*. [Online]
Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/static-reports/sexualhealth-reports/2022/E09000030.html?area-name=Tower%20Hamlets>

UNAIDS, 2015. *Understanding Fast Track*. [Online]
Available at:
https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/201506_JC2743_Understanding_FastTrack_en.pdf
[Accessed 13 April 2022].

World Health Organisation, 2021. *HIV/AIDS*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hiv-aids>
[Accessed 21 April 2022].