

Assessing the performance of commercial sex workers outreach work within Leicester

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1 Introduction

There is no reliable data regarding the number of commercial sex workers (CSWs) within the Leicester city region. A local charity that caters to CSWs in this region, suggests that there are likely to be several hundred women selling sex within Leicester and surrounding areas¹ CSW outreach is essential for equitable access to sexual health, harm reduction, safeguarding and vaccination services.

Our CSW outreach work is delivered by two healthcare advisor assistants. Their role involves attending parlours, homeless shelters, private dwellings and the sexual health hub. Outreach services include sexual health and safety counselling, provision of condom packs, C-Card registrations, facilitation of sexual health clinic appointments and signposting to services (police, housing, social, substance use services and charities). Three weekly sessions are provided. There are eight parlours with which our service has established links.

Project Aim: To assess and provide a baseline of the service's performance in terms of coverage of parlours with which our service has links, number of services provided and first-time user engagement.

2 Methods

Study design

Retrospective case notes review

Setting

Parlours, homeless shelters, private dwellings, sexual health hub

Sample

Outreach work undertaken during 1st May 2025-31 October 2025 was identified from outreach logs

Data collection

- Number of sessions undertaken. Target number of sessions was based on the service providing three weekly sessions (72 sessions)
- Venues visited
- Services provided
- STIs (sexually transmitted infections) detected
- Number of first-time users engaged

3 Results

Outreach Work

- **93.1%** (67/72) of the target number of sessions were completed.
- **62.5%** (5/8) of the parlours had at least a monthly outreach session.
- **88.7%** (126/142) STI screening offers were accepted which resulted in 5 STI diagnoses. There was 1 STI diagnosis in every 25 screenings.
- **100%** (5/5) of the STI diagnoses occurred amongst first-time users of the service.
- **19.7%** (28/142) of the CSW attendees were first-time users of the service.

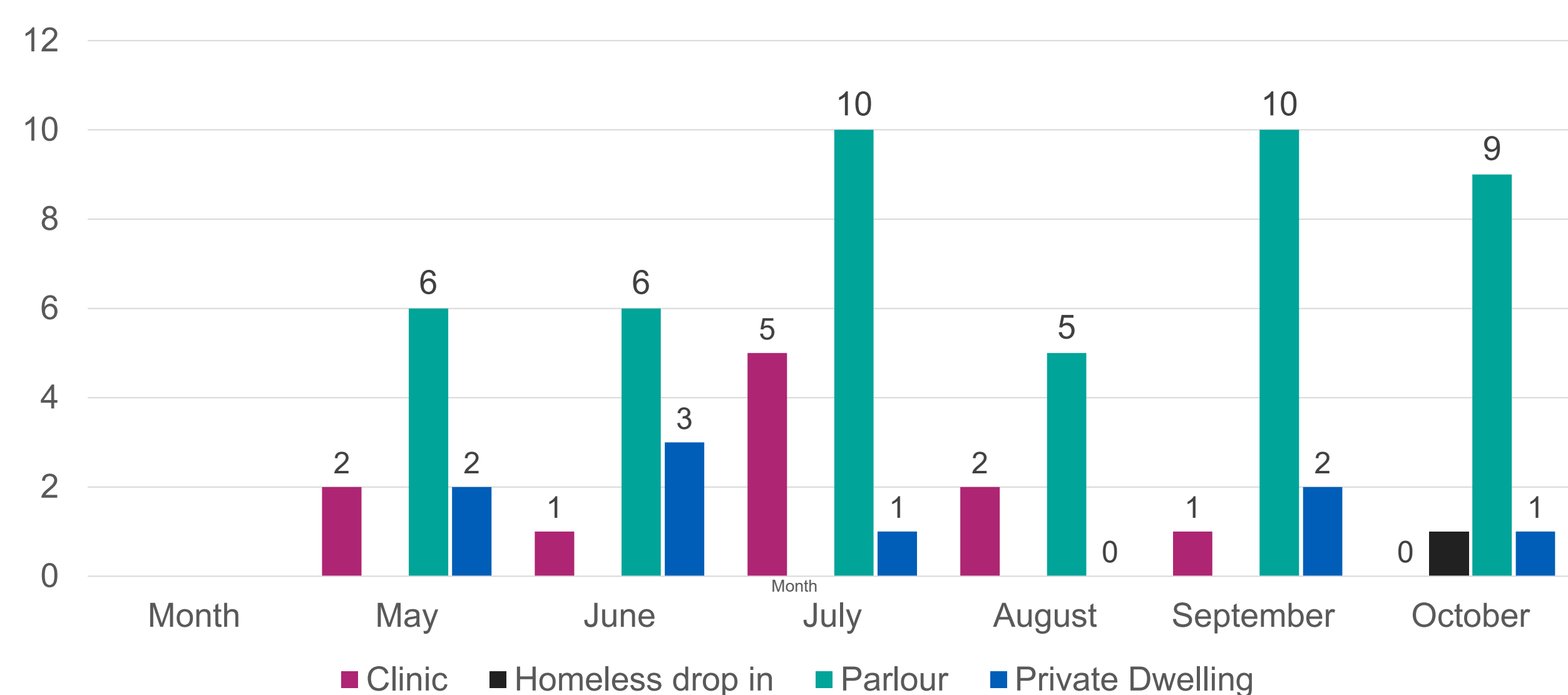


Figure 1: Outreach sessions over 6 months

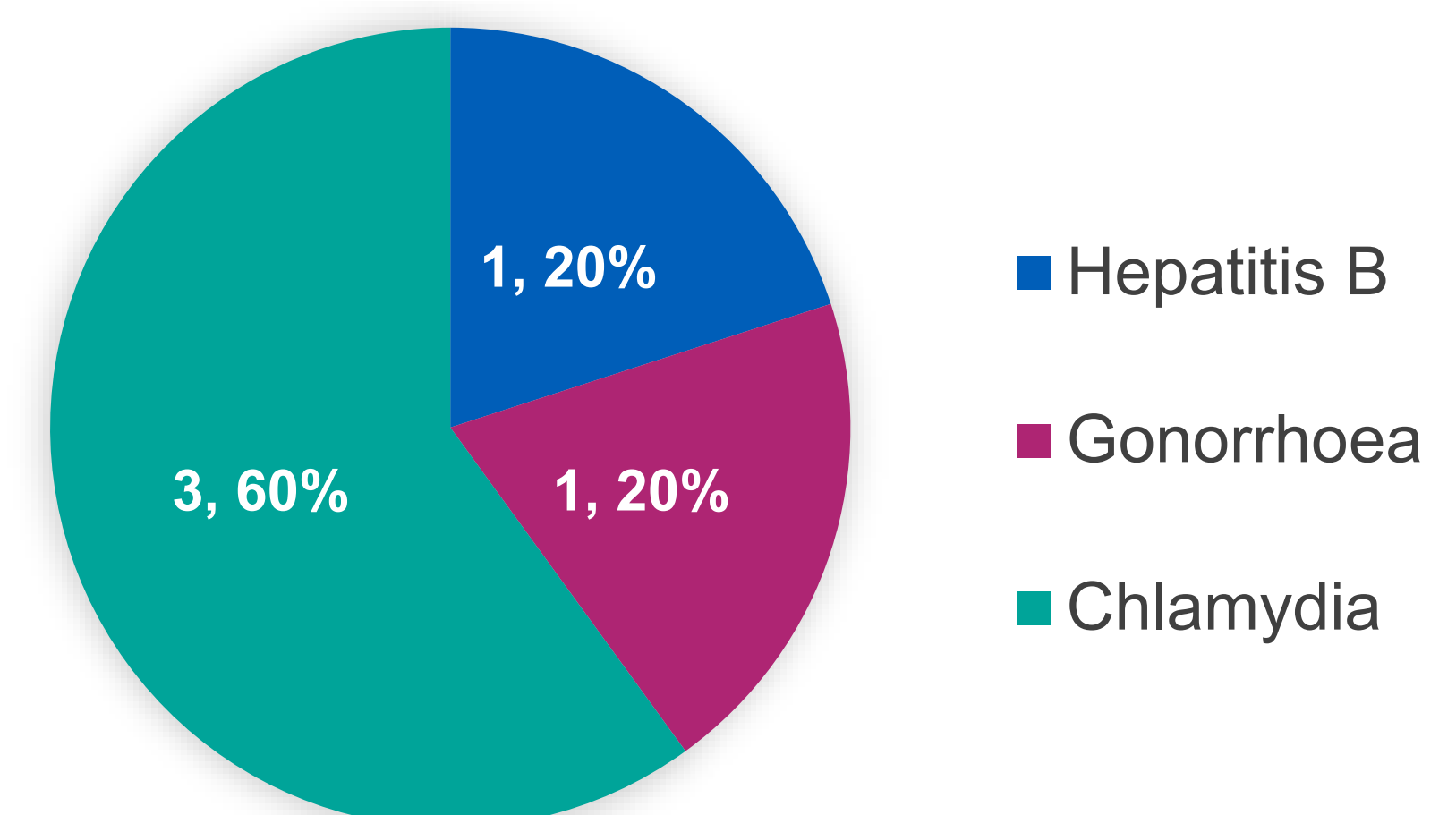


Figure 2: Diagnosed STIs

Service	STI Screen	Condom Packs*	C-Card	Counselling and Signposting	Prescriptions	Sexual Health Appointment Arranged
Number (n=228)	126	69	4	15	2	12

Figure 3 : Services delivered during outreach sessions over 6 months.

* Condom Packs include 20 condoms, 10 lubricant sachets, 1 information card with outreach service details

4 Discussion

Over the six-month period, the service delivered a satisfactory number of sessions. However, the target number of outreach sessions was not achieved, largely due to staff annual leave.

There was a strong uptake of STI screening and condom distribution. The low rate of STIs among regular service users is reassuring and may suggest that consistent engagement with the service helps individuals reduce their risk of acquiring or transmitting STIs. Notably, all diagnosed STIs were found among first-time users, highlighting the importance of improving engagement with new attendees.

Some challenges in reaching first-time attendees have been identified.

- Several venues are reluctant to engage with our outreach workers due to misconceptions that this may attract increased scrutiny from police or immigration services.
- A STI diagnosis can lead to a temporary inability to work, resulting in loss of income and potential stigma, which may discourage some individuals from participating.
- Some venues only operate outside of our service's opening hours and so there is no opportunity for face-to-face engagement.

5 Conclusions

This project provides an initial benchmark for evaluating the performance of our CSW outreach service. This will enable future comparisons of key performance indicators as we continue to strengthen partnerships.

Our Promise to Parlours

To provide free condoms and lube.

Not to criticise, judge or challenge them or the work they do.

Always treat with privacy, respect and dignity.

Strict confidentiality policy.

We will always carry our ID badge with our name and who we work for.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz9l7g24645o?quot>

SPECIAL THANKS

Jamie Scott and Lydia Colton .
Marketing and Communication Officers