

Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to vary the Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking service contract to incorporate the roll out of the Varenicline stop smoking medicine
Decision Maker:	Mark Ansell, Director of Public Health
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Ford, Lead Member for Health
ELT Lead:	Mark Ansell, Director of Public Health
Report Author and contact details:	Alain Rosenberg, Commissioner- Live Well Alain.rosenberg@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	<p>The pharmacy contracts support Havering Council to meet its People Theme priorities of ensuring that people are helped to live independent, socially connected and healthier lives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27.</p> <p>Stop Smoking projects are part of Havering’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities and Partnership agenda to reduce smoking-related harms and reduce inequalities caused by smoking across the borough.</p>
Financial summary:	<p>The cost of provision of Varenicline by community pharmacies is approximately £17,000. Funding for this medication and for the community pharmacy stop smoking service is from the government grant to local authorities to enhance their stop smoking provision.</p> <p>The grant will be made available under section 31(3) and section 31(4) of the</p>

Non-key Executive Decision

	<p>Local Government Act 2003 and is allocated annually.</p> <p>For 2025/2026 the Council has been allocated a grant of £315,471 to support local authority led stop smoking services, approximately £17,000 of which will be allocated to this project for the period June-September 2025</p>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	People's Overview and Scrutiny Board
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

Non-key Executive Decision

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well **X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

This report is seeking the approval of the Director of Public Health to vary the current Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service contract to include the roll-out of the Varenicline, a stop-smoking medicine, from the 2nd June 2025 to the end of the contract which is the 5th of September 2025 at a cost of approximately £17,000.00 and to continue the provision through the pharmacy contract.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

Scheme 3.3.3 - Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1.General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

Scheme 3.3.4c

Specific powers of the Director of Public Health. The Director of Public Health shall be entitled to exercise those powers detailed at 3.3.3 above but provided that such functions shall only be exercised in respect of areas directly affecting Public Health.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

Smoking is the leading cause of avoidable ill health such as cancer, heart and lung diseases and also results in premature deaths. In Havering, the number of smokers has recently shown an increase reversing previous trend. Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, OHID data¹ shows the three year average of smoking prevalence (2021-2023) for adults in Havering was 12.4%, higher than London at 11.6% and the same as England at 12.4%. Also more males, 22.5% smoked compared to females, 8.5%. Available data point to clear inequality of impact caused by smoking with rates higher amongst disadvantaged groups, routine and manual workers and also among those with serious mental illness (SMI). The high rates of smoking within these groups further compound the negative impacts on their health, social and financial wellbeing.

Reducing smoking within these groups and in the wider population will therefore improve overall health and wellbeing. In addition, given the prevailing high cost of living, quitting smoking will provide additional benefit in terms of savings made to incomes.

¹ [Smoking Profile - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk)

Non-key Executive Decision

Reducing tobacco harm remains a key prevention priority outlined in the Havering Health and Wellbeing strategy and actions to reduce smoking are focused on:

- supporting smokers, in particular vulnerable groups, men as well as pregnant women, to quit
- reducing inequality in access to stop smoking service provision and
- providing equal support to reduce smoking for those with mental health conditions (achieve parity of esteem with physical ill health)

Current Contract

The Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service is a 1-year contract with 6 pharmacies in Havering.

The Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service is located in the most deprived parts of the borough. The service is designed to improve access to support for those residents wanting to give up smoking. The service is based in 6 pharmacies throughout the borough. (4 original pharmacies from March 2023 and from August 2024, 2 additional pharmacies).

The community pharmacies are commissioned to provide a face-to-face stop smoking service to reduce smoking, particularly in the more deprived parts of the borough. Face to face service has been shown to be more accessible and more effective in stopping smoking among adults.

The pharmacies provide up to 12 week stop smoking cessation programme and the services offered are set out in the service specification. These consist of behavioural support and advise, provision of licensed medicinal products in accordance with national standards and best practice including NICE and NCSCT guidelines. The service is provided to those meeting the specified inclusion criteria (detailed within the service specification) and those clients not meeting the inclusion criteria will be signposted to a suitable commissioned pathway.

Contract Start Date: - 06/03/2023

Contract End Date: - 05/09/2025

Contract Value: - £160,000

Initially, the Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service was an 18-month pilot was due to expire in September 2024. Subsequently, the contract was varied to expand the scope by adding 5 more pharmacies. As such, the current contract has been running for 30 months with a total value of £160,000.

Varenicline

Varenicline (previously called Champix) is a safe, effective and cost-effective treatment for smoking cessation in adults. It is a first line stop smoking aid and is recommended by NICE for treatment of tobacco dependence. It is slightly more effective than combination NRT, and significantly more effective than single form nicotine-replacement therapies NRT and bupropion.

The introduction of Varenicline will be of huge benefit to people who smoke and want to quit, as it widens the available choice of stop smoking aids.

Varenicline is being rolled out nationally by the NHS and the government advice is to make Varenicline locally available to support more people to quit smoking. When used alongside behavioural support, such as counselling, the treatment has been shown to help around one in four people to stop smoking for at least six months.

The addictive part of cigarette tobacco is called nicotine. Varenicline does not contain Nicotine and works by binding to brain receptors that nicotine normally binds to, thereby reducing nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms such as the urge to smoke again, feeling depressed or irritable, and difficulty sleeping.

Non-key Executive Decision

Varenicline is a medicine which is only available on prescription and comes in tablet form. We propose to include the Varenicline medicine as an additional stop smoking aid within our commissioned Community Pharmacies providing stop smoking services.

To make this available the pharmacists will require the use of Patient Group Direction, PGD, which has been developed locally through a working group by adapting the national Varenicline PGD template.

The adaptations made are in line with the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) Process for local authorisation and implementation of SPS national Patient Group Direction (PGD) all mandatory sections were retained and changes made **only** to the variable sections indicated. Members of the Havering PGD working group include a senior pharmacist providing expert advice in line with SPS guidance. The working group has engaged and welcomed the advice from the Local Pharmaceutical Committee, LPC, a professional group representing local pharmacists.

The roll out of Varenicline will be made available across all community pharmacies currently signed up to the community pharmacy stop smoking service and will focus on people who have expressed an interest in using Varenicline and who meet the criteria for this medicine. Community pharmacy contracts will be re-procured in September 2025 and will incorporate a Varenicline offering within their service delivery model. Feedback from community pharmacies indicates strong demand for Varenicline, with pharmacists maintaining records of residents expressing interest in accessing the medication upon availability. The cost of the variation is to supply, order and dispense the medicine to service users.

The current contract ends on 05.09.2025. The officers are of the view that the current contract is likely to be extended.

The variation value of £17,000 was estimated by the officers, taking into account the demand and interest in using Varenicline and other factors of supply and time. A full detailed service specification is provided alongside the Deed of Variation and is available upon request. This will include the Patient Group Direction (PGD)

Recommendation

It is recommended that the current Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service contract is varied to include the roll out of Varenicline for the remainder of the contract term and to continue the provision when the Community pharmacy contract is re-procured in September 2025. This will ensure the best value for money and outcomes for residents and in line with the Council's stop smoking initiatives.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do Nothing

The implications of not implementing the Varenicline rollout across community pharmacies within the London Borough of Havering include:

- Havering residents would be deprived of access to an effective smoking cessation medication designed to reduce nicotine cravings and alleviate withdrawal symptoms.
- Community pharmacies would have a reduced incentive to participate in the Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service, particularly when demand for the medication is high.
- Service performance and user engagement would likely be negatively impacted, especially during a period when the service is already facing performance challenges.

Non-key Executive Decision

Option 2 – Create a Standalone Contract

An alternative approach considered was a standalone contract. However, this option presented challenges due to the disparate approaches currently employed by the three major stop smoking services operating within the Borough. The lack of a unified strategy for addressing smoking cessation makes this option less desirable.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Pre-decision engagement has taken place, extensively including with the following:

- NEL Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). Public health service has worked closely in partnership with the LPC, a representative body of the local community pharmacists, to shape the service model, identify the training required to deliver the service, and to agree a competitive payment offer to successfully engage local pharmacists to deliver the service.

This proposal has been communicated to commissioned pharmacists who have agreed to provide Varenicline as part of the Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Alain Rosenberg

Designation: Commissioner

Signature:



Date: 27.05.2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Under Section 12 (1) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, each local authority must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area.

The Council has the power to procure and award this contract under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The Council also has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. None of the constraints on the Council's s.1 power are engaged by this decision.

This report seeks approval to vary the Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service contract, as set out in the Council's Contract Procedure Rule 19.1(ii).

To modify the Contract in this way, the value of the modification must be below 50% of the initial contract value. The value of this variation is £17,000 and is less than 50% of the initial contract value.

The officers are satisfied that the contract variation is the most advantageous option for the Council.

For the reasons above, the Council may proceed to vary the current Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service contract to include the roll out of Varenicline.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper seeks approval to vary the existing Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Service contracts to include the rollout of the Varenicline stop smoking medicine from 2nd June 2025 to 5th September at a cost of £17,000. The spend will be funded from the Council's smoking cessation grant for which the council has been allocated £315,471 in 2025-26. The contract spend of £17,500 can be accommodated within the overall planned expenditure associated with this grant and meetings the grant conditions. Any extension of Community Pharmacy Stop Smoking Services beyond 5th September 2025 will be provided by the Public Health Grant

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

Non-key Executive Decision

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out and on this occasion this isn't required

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations.

There are no equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The full service specification for the implementation of Varenicline is outlined in a Deed of Variation which includes the PGD (Patient Group Direction)

APPENDICES

None

Non-key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision


I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed


mark ansell (May 28, 2025 09:28 GMT+1)

28/05/2025

Name: **mark ansell**

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____