

GHN and HSE launch first ever National HIV Prevention Programme for MSM

The Gay Health Network (GHN), in partnership with the HSE, and in association with Dublin City Council (DCC), launched the first ever National HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Awareness Programme for men who have sex with men (MSM) on World AIDS Day, 1st December, in the Mansion House.

This year-long social marketing programme was launched by Roisin Shortall TD, Minister of State, Department of Health with responsibility for Primary Care, and Chairperson of the National AIDS Strategy Committee (NASC).

In Ireland HIV diagnoses have continued to increase significantly among MSM in the last number of years, in particular among younger men aged 18-29 years, and this programme seeks to raise awareness and address this issue, targeting younger men, with emphasis on those residing outside urban centres. The programme will also take account of the ethnic make-up of the MSM population, and MSM living with HIV, many of whom experience HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

This is a unique partnership with the HSE in the promotion of HIV prevention among MSM, and is the only systematic programme addressing these issues for MSM in Ireland. The programme is in line with the Action Plan of the NASC HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012, which seeks to contribute to a reduction in new infections of HIV through education and prevention measures.

A dynamic, youthful and peer-led programme, messages and designs have been driven by a younger MSM peer group facilitated by BeLonG To Youth Services and include messages of building self-esteem, empowering and equipping men to make safer sex choices.

The programme will incorporate four phases, the first phase launched on World AIDS Day 2011, with each subsequent phase rolling out every 3 months for a year.

Activities throughout the year-long programme include a social marketing programme promoting HIV prevention, testing, and sexual health awareness among MSM; increasing access to condoms and lube via the Man2Man.ie website; and health promotion workshops for MSM.

Targeted promotion will form part of the programme in the HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster and HSE Dublin North East regions, as well as promotion nationally. Posters will be available on line at Man2Man.ie and postcards will be distributed through LGBT organisations, clubs, pubs, health centres and local libraries. Local media adverts will be broadcast on radio in specific HSE regions, and social media sites such as Facebook and social contact websites such as Gaydar will play a big part in promoting key messages and reaching the target audience. A video will be linked to each phase and will be uploaded to YouTube and other sites.

<http://youtu.be/RXj1OjkcRN8>

To follow the programme and for more information on each phase, like Man2Man on facebook. <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Man2Man/172493179447045?ref=ts>

A special 'Man2Man Programme' newsletter will also be issued soon and throughout the year-long programme to keep everyone updated on events and promotion.



HIV now notifiable in Ireland

On 21st September 2011, Statutory Instrument No. 452 of 2011 - Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2011 - came into effect.

The amendment details a number of additional infectious diseases which now require to be notified, including HIV. The document can be viewed at www.irishstatutebook.ie/2011/en/si/0452.html.

More information on notifiable diseases is available at www.hpsc.ie, and the HPSC will issue a leaflet on this in the near future.

Man2Man 2010: All-Ireland findings from the 2010 European MSM Internet Survey

Man2Man 2010 is a series of brief thematic reports describing the key findings from the All-Ireland dataset as part of the 2010 European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) – the largest ever sample of gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) in Ireland. Each report will contain information relevant for those working to improve the sexual health and well-being of gay and bisexual men and other MSM in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Gay Men's Health Service, Health Service Executive, (HSE) in collaboration with the Gay Health Network, (GHN) is responsible for the additional analysis and reporting of the All-Ireland dataset.

The first report, Our Community, will be published later in December 2011, and contains information and findings relating to area of residence; age; country of birth; education, employment and living arrangements; sexual attraction, identity and behaviour; being out and friendships; relationships and sexual partners; HIV and STI testing history.

Overall, there were a total of 2,610 valid respondents in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – 2,194 and 416 respectively. This represents the largest ever All-Ireland sample of MSM – more than double the previous largest sample in 2000 (1,290 respondents). Survey respondents were living across Ireland, representing all counties in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Overall, almost half of respondents from the Republic were living in Dublin City and County (46.1%), and in Northern Ireland, over a third of respondents lived in Belfast (34.9%).

Some key findings:

- The most represented five-year age group overall was 25-29 with 19% of respondents, with one-quarter of respondents aged 24 years or younger (25.2%).
- Survey respondents were from 65 different countries worldwide. Following those born in Great Britain (23.3%), the greatest proportion of respondents born outside of Ireland were from Poland (11.9%), Brazil (7.3%), Germany (5.3%), USA (5.1%), Italy (4.2%), France (3.6%), and Spain (3.4%).
- Most respondents reported being sexually attracted only to men (74%), 26% were attracted to men and women, and 0.1% were attracted only to women.
- Most respondents identified themselves as gay or homosexual (79%). Others identified themselves as bisexual (14%), while 8% were categorised as "other".
- Most respondents had sex exclusively with men (82%), 11% with both men and women, and 2% only with women.
- Overall, 40% of men indicated that they are out to most people, while almost one-third (32%) said they were open to few people or no one.
- Overall, 64% of respondents were single, 29% were in a relationship with a man and 6% were in a relationship with a woman.
- Almost one-third of respondents indicated having two to five non-steady sexual partners in the previous 12 months, while over a quarter indicated having none.



The European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) Community Report 2.eu

Key findings relating to HIV and STI testing history:

- Almost two-fifths of respondents indicated that they had never had an HIV test (38.0%).
- Of men who had tested for HIV, approximately 9% had tested positive.
- Approximately two-fifths of respondents indicated that they had not been tested for other STIs or were unsure (41.8%).

Men were least likely to have tested for HIV if they were younger men (24 years and younger) or residing outside of urban centres:

- 84% of men aged 15 to 19 years and 50% of 20 to 24 year olds (50%) had never tested.
- 54% of men living in villages or the countryside (less than 10,000 people) and 46% of men living in small towns or cities (10,000 to 99,999 people) had never tested.

This potentially indicates the need for targeted interventions to increase access and encourage younger men and men living in rural areas to test for HIV.

In conclusion, the report shows that the survey reached a diverse sample of individuals from the MSM community in Ireland. In particular, the survey included those who are typically more difficult to reach with programmes for gay and bisexual men and other MSM, such as foreign-born MSM and 'hidden' MSM – typically those who are not 'out' or in steady partnerships with women.

The full report will be issued later in December 2011 and will also be available to view and download on www.gmhs.ie, www.ghn.ie, and www.rainbow-project.org. Forthcoming reports will cover the following themes: MSM living with HIV; testing and access to services; sexual behaviour and practices; and social issues including stigma and discrimination.

Positive Now Update

Positive Now is a working group of people living with HIV who formed to give people living with HIV or AIDS a voice within existing government and NGO agencies.

The group seeks to improve the well-being and quality of life for people living with HIV and AIDS in Ireland, irrespective of their gender, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. The group is not affiliated or connected to, nor representative of, any statutory or non-statutory agency.

Having secured seats on the National AIDS Strategy Committee (NASC), Positive Now will ensure that people living with HIV are kept informed of any relevant issues which surface at government level. In turn, Positive Now, through their unique position as people living with HIV, will work to ascertain the issues and concerns of other people living with HIV in order to present these issues to NASC and NGO agencies.

Following co-ordination of a forum in Dublin in June 2011 for people living with HIV, Positive Now has been meeting with statutory and NGO HIV agencies in Dublin to feed back the issues raised at the forum. A further forum was held in the Clarion Hotel in Cork in November, with plans for forums in Limerick and Galway in the new year. A full report documenting the forums and the responses from HIV agencies will be published in Spring 2012. Positive Now's new website, www.positivenow.ie, will go live in December 2011. Positive Now can be contacted at positivenow321@gmail.com.



The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) recently published a summary report (provisional data) on the number of STIs notified during the 2nd quarter of 2011. The report is based on data provided by six of eight HSE areas, three of which provided incomplete data.

Table 1: Number of STI notifications by infection and gender, Quarter 2, 2011

STI	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
Ano-genital Warts	193	172	4	369
Chlamydia	592	766	35	1,393
Gonorrhoea	130	42	4	176
Genital Herpes	41	92	18	151
NSU	235	0	1	236
Syphilis	124	42	3	169
Trichomoniasis	0	18	0	18
Totals	1,315	1,132	65	2,512
% of Total STIs	52.3%	45.1%	2.6%	100%

The report shows that there were 2,512 notifications of STIs in quarter 2, 2011, an increase from quarter 1 when 2,357 cases were reported. Men accounted for 52.3% of notifications and women for 45.1%; gender was not recorded for 1.1% of all cases and for 11.9% of notifications of genital herpes. Chlamydia infections accounted for 55.5% of all the notifications in quarter 2, 2011, and 56.5% for the year to date. Table 1 outlines the number of STI notifications by infection and gender for the quarter.

60% of all notifications in quarter 2, 2011, were in people aged 20 to 29 years. 71.5% of syphilis cases were aged 30 years or older. The full report can be viewed and downloaded at www.hpssc.ie.

National Network Update - BeLonG To Youth Service

As well as the flagship youth service in Dublin, BeLonG To currently supports several other LGBT youth services around the country. BeLonG To have established 7 steering committees running 10 groups – 2 in Donegal, 3 in Cork, and one each in Dundalk, Waterford, Tipperary, Limerick and Galway.

BeLonG To also have eight more groups emerging around the country in Sligo/ Mayo (two groups), Tralee, Tallaght, Wexford, Kildare, and Kilkenny. The groups are a mixture of stand-alone projects and partnerships with Youth Work Ireland and Foroige. Sligo, Ballina, Tallaght, Tralee and Kilkenny will all be open by the end of 2011 and supporting LGBT young people in their area, with the other projects coming on-stream over the next few months.

For a full list of LGBT youth support around the country visit www.belongto.org.



Only Human Rights can stop the Wrongs

Sex Workers Alliance Ireland (SWAI) continues to work to promote and enhance the social inclusion and health and safety rights of sex workers.

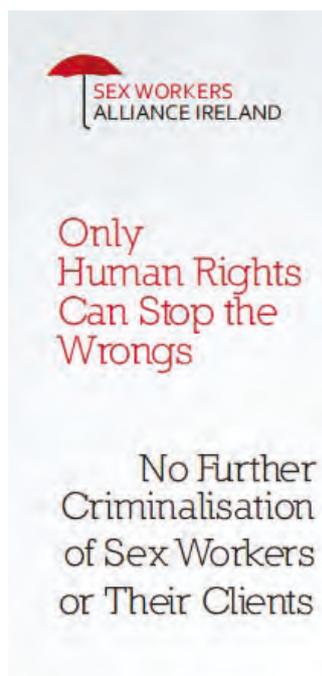
In response to proposed legislation to further criminalise sex work, in particular proposals to criminalise the purchase of sexual services, SWAI has produced a new information leaflet outlining its viewpoints on this issue. SWAI believes that the proposed legislation is Unjust, Unworkable, and Unsafe.

As an organisation concerned with enhancing the health and safety of sex workers and enabling access to health and social care services, SWAI is concerned that a law criminalising all people who purchase sexual services would:

- Force the sex industry further underground;
- Undermine the safety and rights of people involved in sex work;
- Make it more difficult to deliver health, safety and social care support services to sex workers;
- Be extremely difficult to enforce and would divert scarce Garda resources from addressing issues such as: exploitation (e.g. trafficking, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation of children and young people) and violence against sex workers.

SWAI will continue to promote the health and safety rights of sex workers, and supports the recommendation of the National AIDS Strategy Committee (HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012) which states that “A review of current legislation governing prostitution should be undertaken to ensure that access to health and social services is not impeded”.

The new information leaflet will be distributed widely over the coming weeks and can also be viewed on www.sexworkersallianceireland.org.



Homophobic bullying is prevalent in schools in Northern Ireland, according to a recent report published in Belfast by the Rainbow Project and Cara-Friend.

The report, *Left Out of the Equation*, which examines the experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in schools in Northern Ireland, found that they were “systemically denied their right to education and to access that right in a safe, welcoming and respectful environment”. The report highlights that there are numerous factors which contribute to the exclusion and isolation of lesbian, gay and bisexual people including: a lack of legal protections, the absence of the diversity of sexual orientation from the school curriculum, inadequate teacher training and a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ approach to homophobic bullying.

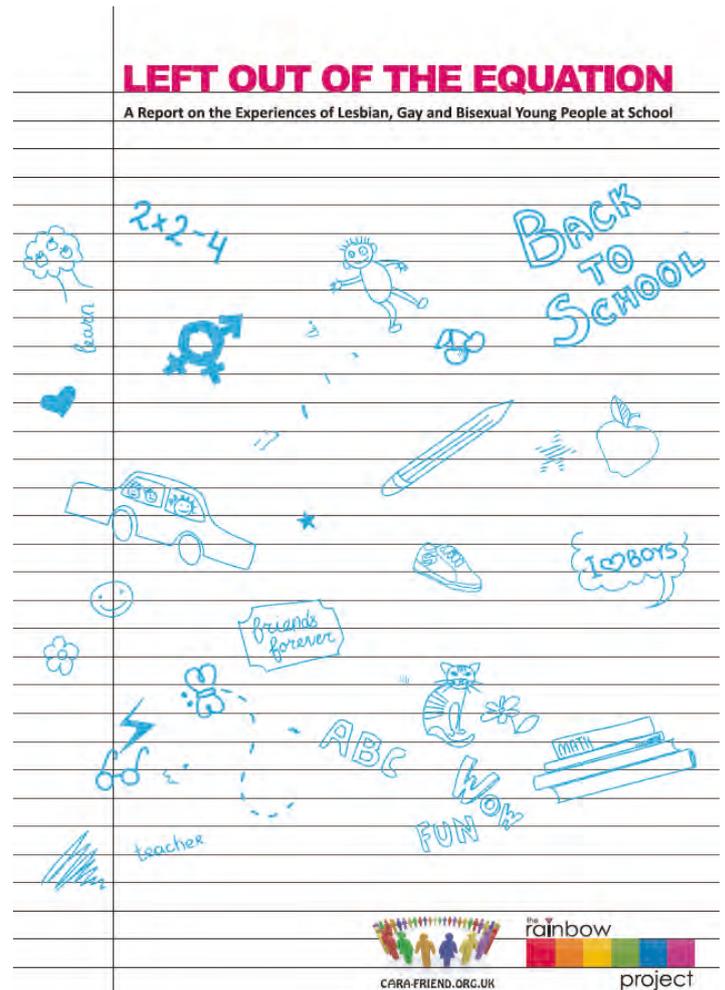
Some of the key findings of the report include:

- 98% of LGB young people heard homophobic language in school.
- 26% of LGB pupils reported homophobic language from teachers.
- 72% of LGB pupils reported that staff ignored homophobic language when they heard it.
- 30% of LGB pupils experienced physical assault in school.
- 43% of gay and bisexual boys experienced physical assault in school.
- 64% of LGB pupils experienced verbal abuse in school.
- 82% of gay and bisexual boys experienced verbal abuse in school.
- 75% of LGB pupils did not report bullying to school authorities.
- 86% of LGB pupils said their school made no effort to tackle homophobic bullying.
- 94% of LGB pupils learnt nothing in sexual health education which was relevant to them.

The key recommendations of the report are that:

- All schools should be covered by a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity.
- The Minister for Education should ensure that there is an adequate complaints mechanism in order for young people and their families to bring complaints against schools which have not responded properly to incidents of homophobic bullying.
- The Minister for Education should amend the Education (NI) Order (2006) to ensure that the diversity of sexual orientation is included thoroughly in non-statutory guidance.
- All schools should be required to have a comprehensive policy in how to tackle homophobic bullying.
- The Minister for Education should ensure that all staff are trained in how to intervene when they witness homophobic language and behaviour.

The full report can be viewed on www.rainbow-project.org and www.cara-friend.org.uk.



Continued expansion of HIV Testing in the Community

The Rainbow Project, in partnership with the Royal GUM Clinic, continues to expand Community Testing Clinics, which now includes testing at the Cage Sauna in Londonderry, as well as at two saunas in Belfast (Pipeworks and Outside).

Clinics are free and confidential, and operate a drop-in service (no appointments necessary). The Rainbow Project's Physical & Sexual Health Worker – Harry McNulty – will be in attendance at each clinic to answer any questions that you may have. Harry can also be contacted on 028 (048 from Rol) 9031 9030 or by emailing: harry@rainbow-project.org.

Upcoming dates for the clinics:

Pipeworks Sauna, Belfast:

Tuesday 20th December 2011 5:30pm to 8pm

Outside Sauna, Belfast:

Check website for next date.

Cage Sauna, L'Derry:

Thursday 5th January 2012 5:30pm to 8pm

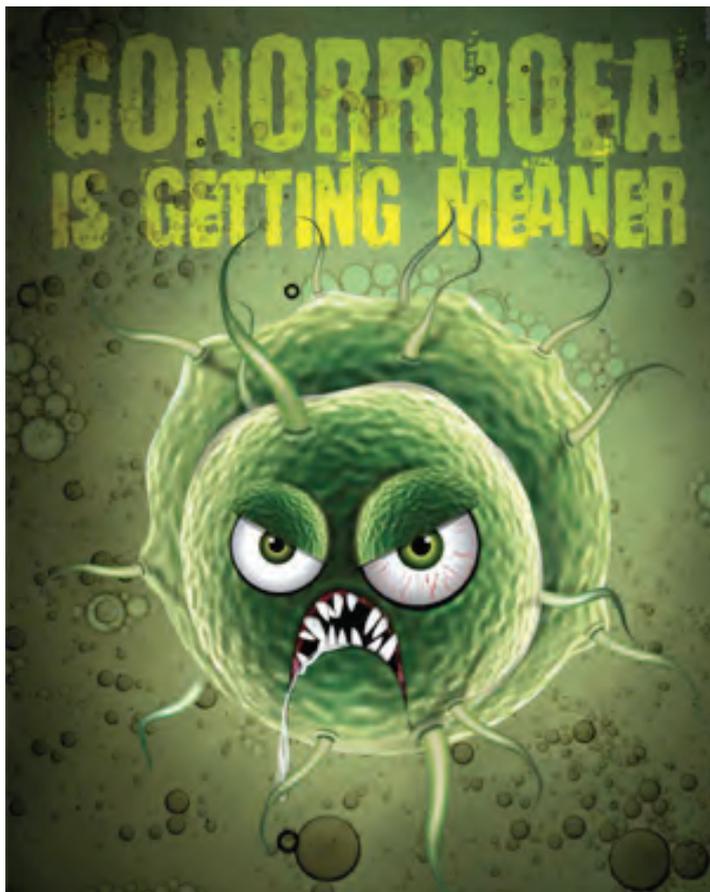
Thursday 8th March 2012 5:30pm to 8pm

Further dates for the clinics are posted on the Rainbow Project's website: www.rainbow-project.org/sh/sexual-health-testing/community-testing.

The Royal GUM Clinic also continues to run a gay and bisexual men's clinic on Thursday evenings from 5pm to 7pm. This is a walk-in service.



Gonorrhoea is an infection caused by bacteria that live in the urethra in men or in the vagina in women, as well as in the throat or the anus and rectum.



There have been recent reports in the media about new types of gonorrhoea that are 'drug resistant'. Currently gonorrhoea can still be cured by antibiotics. Gonorrhoea is changing and the antibiotics used to treat it are becoming less effective. Some clinics may, as a result, give higher doses of treatment and may call people back to the clinic to ensure that the treatment has been effective. Bacteria (like gonorrhoea) can be killed by antibiotics but often they grow resistant to these drugs, and some experts believe that within a few years treating gonorrhoea will be difficult or no longer possible around the world.

Prevention

- Use condoms consistently. Condoms offer the best protection against the transmission of STIs, including gonorrhoea. [It is important to remember that some infections can be transmitted through oral sex and other sexual contact where condoms may not be used].
- Get tested regularly. It is possible to have an infection and show no signs or symptoms. Getting tested is the only way to know if you have an infection. It's important that gonorrhoea is treated, as left untreated it can lead to inflammation of the testicles and prostate in men, pelvic inflammatory disease in women, as well as causing arthritis in the joints in both men and women.

Poster from the recent THT campaign in the UK
www.tht.org.uk

15th Annual CHAPS Conference (C15)

The CHAPS partnership in the UK is now planning the 15th annual CHAPS Conference, C15, which will take place on Wednesday 29th February and Thursday 1st March in Bristol.

The C15 conference team are currently calling for and accepting submissions and ideas for presentations and workshops up to 12th December.

For more information visit <http://www.chapsonline.org.uk/Conference> where you can also register to attend the event.

CHAPS is a Department of Health funded partnership, co-ordinated by Terrence Higgins Trust, of community-based organisations carrying out HIV prevention and sexual health promotion with gay and bisexual men in England.



European Correlation Network Update

The Correlation Network – European Network Social Inclusion & Health, is currently finalising the workplans of 2011/12. The peer involvement website, the outreach/early intervention guidelines and the Social Intervention Tool (outreach on the internet) are all in the final phase of refinement.

The Correlation Conference 'Getting out of the margins in Europe – changing realities and making the difference', to be held on 12th to 14th December 2011 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, will be an excellent opportunity to learn more about the Correlation projects, findings and results. The conference will consist of panel discussions ('the impact of EU policies'), HIV and AIDS, and Hepatitis C major sessions, skill-building workshops and abstract driven sessions. A number of other European projects will organise workshops and present their results. The conference will be concluded by a sex worker dialogue session and a plenary session on drug policy reform.

For further details visit http://www.correlation-net.org/correlation_conference/

Open Heart House (OHH) invites you to support people living with HIV on World AIDS Day 2011 by wearing a red ribbon, the international symbol of HIV awareness.

Open Heart House together with its 1200 Members living with HIV or AIDS, unite in solidarity with all people living with HIV throughout Ireland to celebrate the extraordinary scientific advances in the 30 year HIV story. Friends, families and communities everywhere are also invited to work with OHH towards ZERO stigma and discrimination and to protect the inalienable rights of all people living with HIV to full equality and respect!

Why is World AIDS Day important?

At the end of 2010 (most current figures available) just under 6,000 people are currently living with HIV in Ireland. Globally an estimated 33.3 million people have HIV. More than 25 million people between 1981 and 2007 have died from the virus, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history.

Today, many scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. But despite this, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others from HIV, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with HIV. World AIDS Day is important as it reminds the public and Government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

What should I do on World AIDS Day?

World AIDS Day is an opportunity for you to learn the facts about HIV and put your knowledge into action. If you understand how HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented, and the reality of living with HIV today, you can use this knowledge to take care of your own health and the health of others, and ensure you treat everyone living with HIV fairly, and with respect and understanding.

Schedule of Open Heart House events for World AIDS Day 2011

- 30th November Lunch and Learn @ Open Heart House, 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Theme: 'HIV & Your Mental Health - A Practical Approach' with Dr. Claire Hayes, Clinical Director with AWARE. For Members and invited guests.
- 30th November Open Heart House explores 'Living with HIV – a Peer Support Model' with the Transitional Year Students at the Old Bawn School, Tallaght, Dublin.
- 30th November Open Heart House addresses the General Practitioner Seminar: "Let's talk HIV! 30 years on – From acute illness to chronic disease" to be held at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, 7.00pm to 9.00pm, invite only.
- 1st December Special celebratory Members candlelight dinner @6.30 in Open Heart House celebrating WAD including the dressing of the Open Heart House Tree of Life with personal messages from members and friends (Private to Members and invited guests).

- 1st December Art campaign in Open Heart House culminating in a banner of members reflections to be launched at the Special celebratory Dinner. (Private to Members and invited guests).
- 1st December CEO of Open Heart House, Ms Paula Gilmore will present 'Living and working with HIV – Today's issues', to the Gilead pharmaceutical team in Cork.
- 1st December Carol Singing Fundraiser by The staff of MAC Cosmetics Dublin. The MAC staff from all branches in Dublin will be carol singing outside Brown Thomas on Grafton St from 12.00pm to 5.00pm to help raise much needed funds for Open Heart House.
- 1st December Open Heart House, as a member of Gay Health Network (GHN) Ltd, will be represented at the launch of the new and innovative L.G.B.T. Health Campaign.
- 26th Nov - 3rd Dec Open Heart House launches its Awareness Campaign; 'Living and working with HIV – Today's issues' through nationwide Community Radio stations. Watch: www.openhearthouse.ie and Facebook for up to date Radio stations and times.
- 3rd December Open Heart House members living with HIV and AIDS join other colleagues as we team up with our friends at Newstalk 106 – 108fm to discuss 'HIV – The 30 year story', live on the Global Village programme with Dil Wickremasinghe from 7pm to 9pm
- 5th December Open Heart House will be represented at the United Nations International Volunteer Day Celebratory Event 2011 at the Carlton Dublin Airport Hotel where 8 of our volunteers will be presented with a unique certificate of appreciation for their volunteerism. (The very first State of the World's Volunteerism Report (SWVR) by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme will be launched on the day in several countries around the world.)
- 19th December Open Heart House in partnership with UK colleagues will deliver 1 Day, Train the Trainer workshop entitled: 'B.E.S.T - Better Equipped For Starting Treatment' for professionals who may be engaging with People Living with HIV.

HIV in Ireland: Q1 and Q2 2011

New figures have recently been published by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) on HIV in Ireland.

The new report shows there were a total of 152 new HIV diagnoses reported to the HPSC during Q1 and 2 of 2011. This compares to 166 in Q1 and Q2 of 2010 and 164 in Q3 and Q4 of 2010. The highest number of cases was reported among men who have sex with men (MSM), accounting for 39.5% (n=60) of newly diagnosed cases. A summary of the figures relating to MSM derived from the report is as follows:

- Over one third (36.6%) of newly diagnosed infections among MSM were aged under 30, 70% aged under 40, and 90% aged under 50.
- Of the 51 new cases among MSM where geographic origin was known, information indicates that 58.8% (n=30) were born in Ireland.
- 3 (5%) were diagnosed with an AIDS defining illness at the time of diagnoses, while 38 (63.3%) were asymptomatic.

A full report on the statistics is available at www.hpsc.ie.

New Horizons



Social Space and evening meal for people living with HIV who have a history of addiction.

Ireland's only peer support space for PLHIV & Addiction.
Last Wednesday of the month from 6pm to 9pm

Contact the membership team at 01-830 5000
or Alan at 087 239 7856
alan@openhearthouse.ie

Confidentiality assured and expected

2 St. Mary's Place, D.7
T: 01-830 5000 W: www.openhearthouse.ie



Protect yourself...



...We're worth protecting

HIV infection is increasing in Ireland.

Let's value our sexual health and protect each other when having sex.

You are. He is. We are worth protecting.

Learn more about safer sex, HIV and our sexual health at Man2Man.ie or call

Sexual Health Helpline, Cork
Red Ribbon Project, Limerick
AIDS West, Galway

| T: 021 427 6676
| T: 061 314 354
| T: 091 566 266



Check it out!



A GHN & HSE Initiative
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