HIV & AIDS and Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Submission & Reference Document for the Sub-Committee on Health 5th December 2013 by Gay Health Network (GHN)

Gay Health Network (GHN): www.ghn.ie

Gay Health Network (GHN) established 1994, is an All Ireland network of agencies, organisations (NGO and statutory), individuals, and MSM living with HIV.

GHN and it's members provides a range of frontline services and activities in the promotion of sexual health awareness and HIV prevention including testing, condom and lube use, access to supports available, self-esteem building and empowering men to make safer sex choices, and education and awareness raising.

The actions of the network are evidence-based, strongly linked, developed and guided by accurate knowledge of the behaviour of MSM, and are based on the findings and recommendations of research and relevant reports which GHN is actively involved in including:

- HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012, National AIDS Strategy Committee, Department of Health and Children.
 http://www.dohc.ie/publications/hivaids_education.html &
 http://www.dohc.ie/publications/HIVandAIDS education preventionplan.html
- The All-Ireland Gay Men's Sex Surveys: Vital Statistics 2000; Real Lives One: 2003 & 2004, Real Lives Two: 2005 and 2006 http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie/research
- Surveillance Reports on diagnosed HIV and STI infections among MSM in Ireland, Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/HIVSTIs/HIVandAIDS/
- The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships 2006, Department of Health and Children. http://www.dohc.ie/publications/Irish study of sexual health and relationships.html
- LGBT Health: Towards meeting the needs of LGBT people, Health Service Executive, 2009 http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/topics/Sexual/LGBT%20health.html
- EMIS 2010: The European Men-Who-Have-Sex-With-Men Internet Survey: ECDC 2013 www.emis-project.eu
- The EMIS Ireland Reports: Man2Man Report One: "Our Community"; Man2Man Report Two: "Living With HIV" and Man2Man Report Three: "Our Sex Lives"

http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie/research

- Men From Afar Reports on the Ethnic and Cultural background of MSM attending at GMHS Clinic (GMHS 2013)
 http://hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/gmhs/research/menfromafar4.pdf
- Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) HSE Annual Reports
 http://hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/gmhs/research/gmhsannualreports.html

GHN also encourages an environment of improved information and communications throughout the sector through its quarterly newsletter "On the One Road". http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie/newsletters The newsletter aims to keep the sector updated on new and emerging issues in relation to HIV prevention and sexual health awareness for MSM.

Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

GHN is an all-Ireland network of agencies, organisations (NGO, statutory and voluntary), individuals and men living with HIV, with a shared ethos and commitment to achieving the purpose of the network, sharing ideas, work, resources and experiences.

The main purpose of GHN is to promote HIV prevention and sexual health awareness among men who have sex with men (MSM), with a focus on men living with HIV, and to combat the stigma associated with HIV.

GHN main objectives:

- The promotion of HIV prevention and sexual health awareness among gay and bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), nationally, and in specific communities.
- Addressing and challenging HIV-related stigma and discrimination.
- Commissioning of key research in the area of HIV and sexual health among MSM, including men living with HIV.

GHN subsidiary objectives:

- Promotion of HIV prevention and sexual health awareness through specific programmes and campaigns.
- Ongoing development of a dedicated HIV and sexual health website for MSM.
- The publication of a quarterly newsletter to increase sector-wide communications on the issues.
- The publication of key research reports on relevant issues.
- The publication of HIV and sexual health leaflets and booklets.

Planning Programme to Reduce HIV infections

The work of the GHN the various projects, seeks to contribute to a reduction in new infections of HIV and other STIs through education and prevention measures. This is in line with the aim of the Action Plan of the NASC HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012.

It is widely reported that MSM are a key population group at risk of HIV and STIs. In Ireland HIV and STI diagnoses have continued to increase significantly among MSM, in particular among younger men aged 18-24 years. Reports from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) show a 195% increase in HIV diagnoses among MSM over a ten year period, from 46 in 2002 to 136 in 2011. The HPSC has reported that MSM now account for the highest number of new HIV diagnoses each year (40.6% of all new HIV diagnoses in 2010; 42.5% of all new HIV diagnoses in 2011). Provisional data for 2012 shows the trend continuing with MSM accounting for 49.2% of all new HIV diagnoses.²

STI notifications in Ireland have been on an upward trend since 1995. The HPSC reported a 12.2% increase in STI notifications in 2011, when compared to 2010. Young adults aged under 30 years account for more than two-thirds of reported STI infections annually: 70.8% in 2011; 70.5% in 2010; and 74.1% in 2009. Provisional data for 2012 shows a similar trend

¹ HIV and AIDS, Supplementary tables and figures, 2000 to 2011, Health Protection Surveillance Centre, May 2012

² HIV Quarterly Report, Quarter 3 2012, (provisional data), Health Protection Surveillance Centre, November 2012

with 69.6% of STI notifications among those aged under 30. An emerging trend from 2012 provisional reports published by the HPSC is a marked increase in Gonorrhoea infections (particularly among men), with a 43% increase between 2011 and 2012, and the total in 2012 is the highest number ever recorded in Ireland. The 2012 report for the Gay Men's Health Service STI clinic show that of the 5,600 attendees and 3672 screens, 261 MSM were diagnosed with Gonorrhoea – a 45% increase compared to 2011. There were also 159 Chlamydia diagnoses, 59 HIV diagnoses and 44 syphilis diagnoses among MSM.³ This data suggests that initiatives need to be developed, and sustained, to promote consistent HIV and STI prevention messages, targeted specifically at MSM.

The HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012 highlighted the importance of HIV and STI prevention measures, estimating that comprehensive safer sex prevention initiatives could reduce up to 63% of new HIV infections, and if adequately resourced, could also impact on reducing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and improving sexual health.

The 2012 Man2Man.ie Programme⁴

In 2011, GHN engaged in consultations with the HSE Health Promotion department, and agreed a partnership for a year-long HIV prevention and sexual health awareness programme targeting MSM, with emphasis on younger men and men living outside of main urban centres. The Man2Man.ie programme was launched on World AIDS Day 2011 (1st December) by Minister Roísín Shortall, and closed with the launch of 'Translating Man2Man' by Minister Alex White for World AIDS Day 2012.

The programme comprised of four phases, each one promoted for a three-month period, and each phase included a video and other promotional materials (postcards and posters). The key messages for all phases of the programme were developed by a younger MSM peer group facilitated by BeLonG To Youth Service.

- Phase 1 Protect yourself: We're worth protecting aims to raise awareness that HIV infection is increasing in Ireland, particularly among MSM.
- Phase 2 Get Tested: We're worth protecting promotes the availability of free HIV and STI testing services nationally and aims to encourage regular testing among MSM.
- Phase 3 Support each other: We're all worth respecting raises awareness of the stigma, discrimination and isolation often faced by people living with HIV.
- Phase 4 Always use condoms and lube when having sex: promotes consistent condom use as the most effective way to prevent the transmission of HIV and other STIs.

As part of the programme, particular services for MSM were promoted such as GMHS HSE testing services, Gay Switchboard Dublin and the Man2Man.ie website resource.

Man2Man.ie Programme 2012 – Summary of Key Activities and Results: http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie/assets/files/pdfs/newsletters/Final_Web_Version_Newsletter_Issue_18.pdf

- 81% increase in website visitors to Man2Man.ie (compared to 2011).
- 380 unique viewers per week to Man2Man Facebook page.
- 1,650% increase in views on Man2ManIreland YouTube page from Ireland, where videos were made available (pre- -v- post-campaign)
- 101,700 postcards and posters distributed across 30 counties in Ireland, with 140 supporting organisations.

³ GMHS 20 Annual Report 2012

⁴ Report on the joint GHN and HSE Man2Man Programme 2012, GHN June 2013

- Targeted promotion to men living outside urban centres in the Dublin North East and Dublin Mid-Leinster regions, through 20 local newspapers, across 11 counties over 13 months.
- 13 months promotion in Ireland's main gay magazine, GCN and online at GCN.ie throughout 2011 there were 36,000 readers per month; 19,000 unique website visitors per month; and 211,663 impressions on the Man2Man web banner.
- 65% increase in calls to LGBT helplines in the 10 counties specifically targeted in the Dublin North East and Dublin Mid-Leinster regions (compared to 2011).
- 9% increase in attendees at GMHS HSE Clinic (compared to 2011). This included a 5% increase in new (first-time) attendees; and a 25% attendance increase of men living in rural Ireland, particularly targeted counties in the HSE Dublin North East and Dublin Mid Leinster regions.
- 8.6m banner impressions on social contact website Gaydar, with 8,387 clicks to Man2Man.
- Targeted promotion at five LGBT Pride Festivals around Ireland.
- Participated in the Union of Students Ireland Sexual Health Roadshow in four colleges across Ireland.
- Produced and distributed 100,000 safer sex packs to increase usage of condoms and lube.
- Translating Man2Man: translated the programme materials and videos into 8 other languages.

Man2Man.ie 2014

The HSE and GHN Partnership Initiative for 2013-2014.

An HIV prevention and sexual health awareness project targeted at gay and bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (MSM), nationally, building on the achievements of the joint Gay Health Network (GHN) and HSE 2012 'Man2Man.ie' programme.

Project Aim:

To promote consistent and sustained HIV and STI prevention messages among MSM in Ireland, reinforcing the importance of taking responsibility for - and taking care of - their sexual health.

Build on the achievements of the joint GHN and HSE 2012 'Man2Man.ie' programme:

Objective 1: National promotion and continuous development of Man2Man.ie, the only HIV and sexual health information and resource website specifically targeting MSM in Ireland.

Actions:

- Maintain the website and continue to provide this resource to MSM.
- Continuous development of the information and update when required, including support services available for MSM.
- Upload all new project/promotional materials.
- Promote the website nationally.
- Include HIV-positive men in sexual health and HIV prevention messages.

Objective 2: Promote social inclusion and increase access to information for harder-to-reach groups living outside of urban areas through social media, and print and broadcast media.

Actions:

- Improve and increase engagement of the target group through social media channels such as Facebook and websites serving MSM such as Gaydar, QueerID, Gaire and Squirt.
- Targeted promotion via local print media and online social media to men living outside of urban centres.
- National promotion via broadcast and online media.

Objective 3: Initiate a peer-led volunteer outreach service to promote HIV prevention and sexual health at social venues, and distribute condoms and lube.

Actions:

- Establish a partnership with GHN members to initiate a volunteer-base.
- Develop and deliver sexual health and outreach training to volunteers.
- Purchase safer sex packs for distribution through the service.
- Continue to provide condoms to key social venues for distribution.
- Establish and implement an Outreach Action Plan to social venues.

Objective 4: Respond to emerging trends, in consultation with key stakeholders, by developing targeted and tailored HIV and STI prevention initiatives.

Actions:

- Publish a series of promotional leaflets to raise awareness of continuing upward trends in HIV and STI diagnoses among MSM.
- Ensure all GHN projects and actions are evidence-based, strongly linked to the findings and recommendations of research and relevant reports including the HPSC Surveillance Reports and the pending National Sexual Health Strategy.
- Engage with relevant committees and networks, ensuring consistent consultation with key stakeholders in relation to emerging trends, and support services.
- Organise community and researcher forums to discuss emerging dynamics in the sexual culture of MSM in Ireland and shifting norms in HIV prevention.

The expected outcomes of the 2014 programme

Build on the key achievements and results of the current 'Man2Man.ie' programme:

- Increased awareness and knowledge of sexual health issues among MSM.
- Increased access to information via internet and other sources.
- Increased knowledge of and access to to support services for MSM, including HIV-positive MSM.
- Increased regular HIV and STI testing among MSM.
- Increased access to and use of condoms and lube among MSM.

The campaign will integrate with other agencies and organisations

- The campaign will involve the partnership of NGOs and statutory agencies and individuals actively involved in GHN who will promote the campaign with their own client groups and in their local areas. GHN membership includes representatives of people living with HIV. The following organisations are currently represented on GHN:
 - BeLonG To Youth Service
 - Dublin AIDS Alliance
 - Gay Doctors Ireland
 - Gay Men's Health Service, HSE

- Gay Switchboard Dublin
- Open Heart House
- Outhouse LGBT Community Centre
- Positive Now
- > The Rainbow Project, Belfast and Derry
- The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (Newry)
- Sex Workers Alliance Ireland
- Union of Students Ireland
- GHN also receives active support for some/all of our projects from OutWest, AIDS West, Greenbow, Sexual Health Centre Cork, Gay Project Cork, Red Ribbon Project Limerick, Dublin Pride Committee, Rainbow Support Services Limerick, Cavan LGBT Group, GCN, and Transgender Equality Network Ireland.
- The established GHN and HSE partnership for the Man2Man.ie programme will continue.
- GHN will also seek to expand partnerships for this programme.
- GHN will liaise closely with national and local representatives from STI/GUM services and the HSE Public Health Department and Health Promotion Departments.
- The campaign will include promotion of relevant HSE services and services provided by other local NGO and community organisations.

The programme represents Value for Money

- This proposed 2013/2014 programme provides an opportunity to build on the current investment and achievements as outlined from the 2012 programme above.
- This type of project has longevity, for consistent and sustained promotion of HIV and STI prevention messages among MSM.
- GHN is the only network in Ireland that is committed to and has a specific focus on MSM and men living with HIV. This partnership ensures a cost-effective approach towards meeting the needs of HIV prevention and sexual health promotion for MSM, and in particular, improving the availability and access to sexual health resources outside of urban centres.
- There are no salary costs involved in the work of GHN. All funding received by GHN is
 used solely for project-specific purposes as members of GHN provide their time,
 resources, and experience in-kind, on a voluntary basis, and/or on behalf of their
 respective organisations. GHN will utilise these existing resources for the management,
 administration and planning of the programme.
- The involvement and input from the agencies and organisations involved in the network reduce costs significantly. There are minimal administration costs and no overheads.
- Engaging the target group via innovative methods such as online social media has the
 potential to reach a large national audience, as shown in the key results of the 2012
 programme.
- Through this campaign, GHN seeks to achieve some of the goals and recommendations set by the HSE and the Department of Health and Children in two key reports, namely the HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012; and LGBT Health: Towards meeting the needs of LGBT people.

Actions Already Delivered for Man2Man 2013/2014

As part of its strategic planning, the evaluation of Man2Man 2012/2013 and the recent reports from EMIS and Gay Men's Health Service, GHN members met in

October 2013 and formulated a course of actions for the next phase. This will lead to the launch of the HSE and GHN, Man2Man 2014 Programme early next year.

Objective 1: National promotion and continuous development of Man2Man.ie

- Updated the man2man website and added a resources page for services.
- Developed the GHN Quarterly Newsletter "On the One Road (Quarterly Newsletter) for delivery via MailChimp.

Objective 2: Promote social inclusion and increase access to information for harder-to-reach groups living outside of urban areas through social media, and print and broadcast media. We launched a

- Twitter account
- Continued Facebook promotion
- And placed a new banner on Gaydar

Objective 3: Initiate a peer-led volunteer outreach service to promote HIV prevention and sexual health at social venues and to distribute condoms and lube. Launched

- A Drop-In Sexual Health Information Service: Launched Nov 30th 2013
- A New Email Support Service: ask@ghn.ie ibid
- Distribution of Man2Man Condom Packs at social venues. GHN Volunteers in Dublin and Cork distributed man2man packs around gay social venues
- Established a co-ordination process for delivery of the increasing amounts of requests for talks and workshops on services, for free condoms and leaflets from a range of LGBT organisations and 3rd level LGBT Student Societies.

Objective 4: Respond to emerging trends, in consultation with key stakeholders, by developing targeted and tailored HIV and STI prevention initiatives.

- Launched the Luv Bugs Project: Six leaflets published to date on Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Syphilis, HIV, PEP and Hepatitis B Vaccine and further publications are in design. http://www.man2man.ie/resources.html
- Published the Research Reports: "Our Sex Lives" Man2Man Report 3
- Participation in the "Gonorrhoea Control Group" run by the Public Health Dept. HSE East.
- Meeting with the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Health
- Developed a new working arrangement with Gay Community News (GCN) for sexual health promotion. The first is the current December issue centre pages feature. http://www.gcn.ie/this_month#mag
- Hosted the first of the Community Forums at Outhouse for World AIDS Day "Our Sex Lives & Sexual Health"

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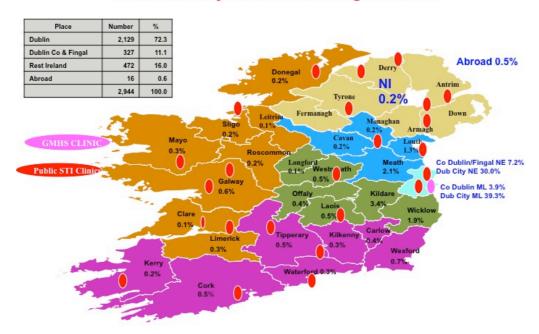
Two other programmes strongly associated with the man2man 2014 is the two Personal Development, Assertiveness and Sexual Health Courses by;

- BeLonG To young MSM aged for those aged 18-24
- Gay Switchboard will deliver a course for over those aged over 24

Appendix 1

1.1. Registrations at the GMHS clinic indicates that yearly, 16% of new attendees reside outside Dublin City and County: DML is the highest followed by DNE and the counties bordering Dublin.

MSM Registered at GMHS Clinic 2009-2012 by Where Residing N=2,944



1. 2. EMIS 2010 estimated an MSM population across Europe GHN has used this to help plan programme.

Table 1: Estimated MSM Population aged 15 to 79 by HSE Regions based on CSO 2011 n=51,738

HSE DML	MSM	HSE DNE	MSM	HSE South	MSM	HSE West	MSM
County	POP	County	POP	County	POP	County	POP
Dublin	8,125	Dublin	5,993	Cork	5,863	Galway	2,841
Kildare	2,384	Cavan	843	Carlow	625	Clare	1,328
Laois	925	Louth	1,384	Kerry	1,654	Donegal	1,835
Longford	448	Meath	2,093	Kilkenny	1,089	Leitrim	368
Offaly	876	Monaghan	694	Tipperary	1,813	Limerick	2,182
Westmeath	975			Waterford	1,286	Mayo	1,490
Wicklow	1,538			Wexford	1,638	Roscommon	737
						Sligo	739
DML Total	15,271	DNE Total	11,007	South Total	13,968	West Total	11,520

1. 3. EMIS 2010: is the largest transnational survey of MSM across Europe and in Ireland. The response from Ireland was the 4th highest with a return over 4% for the MSM population. EMIS highlight that younger MSM and those living outside main urban areas and outside Dublin City have a lower uptake for HIV and Sexual Health screenings.

Table 3: The MSM population and the EMIS 2010 response by HSE Region

HSE Area	MSM POP	EMIS Response	By % of POP	
DML	15,271	680	4.5%	
DNE	11,007	650	5.9%	
South	13,968	415	3.0%	
West	11,520	253	2.2%	
Total HSE	51,766	2307	4.5%	

Table 4: EMIS 2010 & Testing Behaviours % by Not testing for HIV and STIs and HIV and Syphilis Positive by County

Counties and HSE Regions	MSM POP	EMIS N=	% Not Tested for STIs median 39.2%	% Not Tested for HIV Median 37.4%	% Tested HIV Positive of those tested Median 6.1%	% Diagnnosed for Syphilis Median 8%
Dublin City	5,860	868	30.5%	26.6%	8.5%	10.8%
Dublin Co	8,258	195	46.3%	47.4%	2.6%	3.1%
HSE DML						
Kildare	2,384	59	50.0%	55.9%	3.4%	8.5%
Laois	925	14	50.0%	50.0%		14.3%
Longford	448	6	33.3%	33.3%		
Offaly	876	10	50.0%	50.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Westmeath	975	29	40.7%	41.4%	6.9%	13.8%
Wicklow	1538	30	48.3%	36.7%		20.0%
HSE DNE						
Cavan	843	9	55.6%	66.7%	11.1%	
Louth	1384	54	51.9%	51.9%	1.8%	9.3%
Meath	2093	45	46.5%	48.9%	2.2%	4.5%
Monaghan	694	10	80.0%	70.0%		
HSE South						
Cork	5863	212	44.4%	39.5%	3.8%	4.8%
Carlow	625	16	31.2%	31.2%		6.2%
Kerry	1654	28	60.7%	46.4%	3.6%	
Kilkenny	1089	17	35.3%	50.0%		12.5%
Tipperary	1813	41	56.1%	53.7%	4.9%	2.4%
Waterford	1286	43	46.3%	54.8%	7.1%	4.8%
Wexford	1638	58	45.6%	42.1%	3.5%	1.8%
HSE West						
Galway	2841	76	44.0%	36.8%		
Clare	1328	28	50.0%	46.4%	10.7%	3.6%
Donegal	1835	32	50.0%	50.0%	15.6%	6.3%
Leitrim	368	5	20.0%	20.0%		
Limerick	2182	65	47.7%	44.6%	3.1%	3.1%
Mayo	1490	26	65.2%	65.4%		
Roscommon	737	9	44.4%	55.6%		
Sligo	739	12	33.3%	25.0%	25.0%	33.3%
Total HSE	51,766	n=1,988	39.2%	37.4%	5.8%	7.4%

Note: Gray shaded area indicates higher none testing rates than national average

Red Font indicates higher % than national average

Shaded pink indicates where free HSE STI/GUM Services are based $\,$

^{*16%} (23) MSM diagnosed HIV did not indicate where residing and 7% of not tested .