

# GMHS26



## THE ANNUAL REPORT 2018 GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE, HSE



The Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) reached its 26th year of operation on October 6th 2018 and continues to be the only statutory Public Health Service in Ireland for gay and bisexual men, men who have sex with men (MSM) and the trans community. In that time the service has facilitated over 110,000 patient visits.

2018 was a very busy year at GMHS with an overall increase of 20% in patient attendances on the previous year. There was a proportionate increase in all STI's diagnosed as a result. One third of all new attendees were diagnosed with an STI indicating that the service is effective at targeting those who are most in need of STI screening, treatment and follow-up.

The GMHS is funded and managed by HSE Community Healthcare East and is centrally involved in strategies and actions to reduce the incidence of HIV and STI's in the MSM community and beyond. Funding was also allocated for the asymptomatic screening clinic, Outreach programme and the HPV vaccination clinic by Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) through Health and Wellbeing.

In Ireland in 2018 of the 528 (provisional number) newly recorded HIV cases MSM accounted for a significant proportion according to the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). The high rates of HIV

within the MSM population along with the significant increase in other STIs highlights the importance of a targeted service for MSM. In 2018 according to the HPSC there was also a reported 7% overall increase in sexually transmitted infections (STI's) with a large proportion in MSM where mode of transmission was known. It also demonstrates that addressing these concerns in a holistic and comprehensive manner is an important approach as outlined in the National Sexual Health Strategy and action plan. The strategy will run from 2015 – 2020.

This GMHS has a vital role in promoting and delivering this service and the increasing demand upon it. The popularity of the clinic and the significant cohort of MSM attending from all parts of Ireland (approximately 15% reside outside Dublin) demonstrates that the HSE is fulfilling some of the indicators from the National Sexual Health Strategy. In 2018, 1399 service users attended GMHS for the first time and a significant percentage had never tested previously for HIV (27%) or other STIs (36%) proving that the continuation of and increased access to the GMHS STI checkpoint is vital. The delivery of the clinical service is made possible by the commitment and work of the staff, which is widely appreciated and acknowledged by Health Service Executive Management and the MSM community.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2018

### DEVELOPMENT OF A PREP MONITORING AND PRESCRIPTION CLINIC.

A pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) monitoring clinic was established in mid-November 2017 to facilitate people already accessing PrEP online or interested in being assessed for suitability to consider starting PrEP. Many studies have demonstrated that PrEP, when taken correctly, is highly effective at preventing acquisition of HIV. International uptake of the drug (alongside other HIV prevention measures) by MSM in areas with high HIV prevalence such as London has seen dramatic decreases in HIV diagnoses. Service users attending the GMHS PrEP clinic undergo rapid HIV test as well as a full STI screen, kidney function monitoring, and detailed consultation regarding PrEP including suitability, side effects, dosing options, access to prescription and importance of 3 monthly screening. This has expanded STI testing services to 4 times weekly. This clinic has proved extremely popular and is a brave and progressive step in HIV prevention in this cohort. With the availability of generic PrEP in pharmacies in Ireland at the end of 2017 this clinic grew and developed catering for over 1,000 patients during 2018 in addition providing prescriptions to attendees to purchase the medication at community pharmacies.

### HPV VACCINE CLINIC.

A HPV vaccine clinic was introduced in April 2017 and continued into 2018 to deliver a targeted vaccination service to MSM aged 26 and younger initially and then expanding access up to the age of 45. Funding was allocated to the service from SHCOP to facilitate a part time HPV vaccine nurse to set up the service and monitor attendance ensuring those expressing interest completed the course. In 2018 the clinic administered 1405 HPV vaccines. This invaluable preventative service has encouraged a number of people to access services, testing and treatment who may not have done so in the past while also providing education and support for this vulnerable cohort of patients and making every contact and intervention count.

### STI CHECKPOINT AT BAGGOT ST.

The GMHS STI Checkpoint at Baggot St Hospital, Dublin 4<sup>1</sup> is for all men who have sex with men (MSM) and the trans population. A multi-disciplinary team provide free, friendly and confidential clinics on Monday afternoon, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and Thursday mornings. The weekly attendance of over 230 service users highlights the popularity and need for such a service. This is also enhanced by a satellite clinic on the third Saturday of every month at Outhouse LGBT Community Centre. In 2018 there were 11 outreach sessions at Outhouse with 210 people availing of the testing an average of 20 per clinic with a 20% pick up of STI's. Two nurses run this STI Checkpoint along with the Gay Switchboard Ireland volunteers, whose support is invaluable as they 'meet and greet' all attendees making the experience more friendly and pleasant for those attending.

### GMHS COUNSELLING SERVICE

In 2018 44 individuals presented to the service requesting counselling support. The service currently has a waiting list of up to three months on average. Those who have accessed the service range in age from 19 to 68 years old but the predominant group is from 30 to 45 years old which is the trend repeated from previous years. The counselling is provided by two psychotherapists who are accredited by The Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) and The Irish Council for Psychotherapy, and are supervised accordingly to the standards of these two organisations.

Referrals came from mostly Baggot Street Clinic to support MSM to improve their awareness of their sexual health and promote their sense of mental wellbeing. Clients continue to present with diverse issues such as social anxiety, coming out, relationship problems, 'arranged marriage', lack of confidence, substance abuse, and individuals experiencing issues with poor mental health. Social prejudices and anxieties about coming out to friends and family can exacerbate underlying emotional issues, making it most important to seek a non-judgmental environment for self-exploration and growth. They value the fact that this therapeutic support is offered within an LGBTQ affirmative and culturally sensitive context.

### OUTREACH AT GMHS

The GMHS MSM peer sexual health outreach team continued to develop a programme of outreach work and initiatives during 2018 to address emerging needs and trends that are arising from the current increase in HIV & STI's among MSM.

2 peer outreach workers undertake outreach work for 20 hours each per week which focuses on offering information, signposting, referrals and interventions through contact on popular online hook-up/dating apps and websites, in public venues, bars, clubs, public sex environments, sex on premises venues and other settings where MSM may meet to have or arrange sex.

The outreach team aim to bridge gaps in current service provision and the work of the team results in an increased awareness of HIV & STI prevention, available testing and treatment services and other interventions which in turn have the ability to reduce transmission of preventable sexually acquired infections.

## DIAGNOSIS AT GMHS 2018

In 2018 there were 190 clinics at GMHS (51 weeks) and the demands on GMHS continued to increase with 11,498 attendances to the service (1399 were first time attendees at GMHS).

There were approximately 1500 diagnoses of an STI in 2018, summarised as follows:

- 833 Gonorrhoea infections – a 12% increase on 2017 figures (36% were first time attendees to GMHS). 16% of patients were diagnosed with Gonorrhoea at 2 sites during 2018 while 1% were diagnosed with Gonorrhoea at 3 sites in that 12 month period.
  - Where a single site of infection was identified 34% of GC infections were Rectal, 57% Pharyngeal, 9% Urethral.
  - 7% of patients were treated for GC on two separate occasions during 2018 with 2% being treated on 3 separate occasions.
- 603 Chlamydia infections – an increase of 35% over 2017 (37% were first time attendees to GMHS). 16% of patients were diagnosed with Chlamydia at two sites in 2018 while 1% were diagnosed with Chlamydia at 3 sites in that 12 month period
  - Where single site of infection was identified 69% of CT Infections were Rectal, 21% Urethral and 20% Pharyngeal.
  - 5% of patients were treated for CT on two separate occasions during 2018 with 1% being treated on 3 separate occasions.
- 83 HIV infections were diagnosed during 2018, 44 of these were first time diagnoses and were previously unaware, while 47% (39/83) had tested positive elsewhere. All patients diagnosed with HIV were linked to local services within 1-2 weeks of diagnosis. 64% were first time patients to GMHS. Of note 16% of new infections had tested negative within the previous 3 to 6 months with a further 23% testing negative within the previous year. For 7% of new diagnoses this was their first ever HIV test.
- 169 diagnoses of Syphilis – 17% were re- infections (64% were first time attendees to GMHS).
- Hepatitis C infections were also diagnosed.

There were further cases of: HSV (genital herpes), LGV, Shigella and treatments for HPV (genital warts).

In addition there were 2,362 preventative vaccines administered in 2018 for Hepatitis A and B rising to 3,767 when HPV vaccines are included.

There were 11,708 service users catered for in 2018 for a combination of assessments, screening, vaccinations and reviews. The total figure represents a 20% increase in attendance on 2017 numbers.

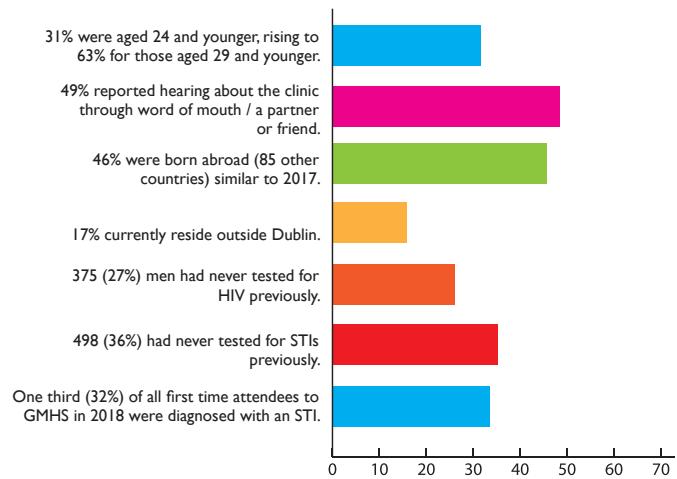
The increase in testing, detection, treatment and follow-up of positive results has significantly impacted on the staff and already limited resources of the GMHS.

## PEP AT GMHS 2018

275 patients were prescribed Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in 2018 (an increase of 32% compared to 2017). 97 (35%) patients were first time attendees to the clinic. 47% were Irish, 5% reported sexual assault within the previous 72 hours as the reason for accessing PEP, all of these patients were counselled regarding assessment at a sexual assault treatment unit. 43% were between 48 and 72 hours from the exposure. 51% reported impaired judgement / being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at time of exposure. 40% were under the age of 30.

## PATIENT'S FIRST PRESENTATION TO GMHS 2018

There were 1399 patients whose first ever presentation to the GMHS screening service was in 2018: an increase of 11% on the number of patients who presented to the service for the first time in 2017. Of these:



## ENHANCING ACCESS TO HIV AND STI TESTING 2018

There is an asymptomatic Nurse led screening service available for patients at all 4 GMHS clinics at Baggot St Hospital and this is also provided at the outreach service at Outhouse LGBT Community Centre, Capel St., Dublin 1 (held on the third Saturday of each Month)

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT AT GMHS

2018 saw the initiation and development of nurse prescribing at GMHS with one nurse completing the training at UCD and a second nurse gaining entry to the training course to be completed in 2019. Nurse prescribing allows staff to work more independently, increasing the convenience and speed with which patients receive their diagnosis, treatment plan and management of care. This initiative will help to streamline services offered at GMHS with information and treatment tailored to the patient's needs and will ultimately help to improve patient's satisfaction and safety. This enhanced development of GMHS services was only made possible by funding and support from Community Healthcare East.

# GMHS26



Another initiative to enhance the patient experience within GMHS was completion of the Sexual Health Advising course by seven nursing and outreach staff supported by funding from SHCPP. This post graduate certificate course was facilitated by Staffordshire University and aimed to develop knowledge and understanding of the theory and practice of sexual health advising and expanding scope of practice of nursing staff, reducing transmission of infection, with the ultimate aim of improving patient outcomes.

## HIV PREVENTION & SEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS 2017

As a HSE service, GMHS values the partnership with the Gay Health Network (GHN), and its members across Ireland and Outhouse (LGBT+ Community Centre Dublin), Gay Switchboard Ireland, HIV Ireland, Positive Now and BeLonG To Youth Service amongst others. GMHS sees the continued sustainability of the [www.man2man.ie](http://www.man2man.ie) programme as vital for a national response to the HIV and sexual health education and STI prevention needs of MSM in Ireland. Of enormous importance and benefit also are the partnerships with Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme and Health Protection Surveillance Centre. A new partnership that emerged in 2016 through designing resources on chemsex was that of addiction services, sexual health services, HIV Ireland, Gay Switchboard Ireland, Rialto community drugs team and Social Inclusion Services.

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS FOR GMHS IN 2018 WERE:

- Published GMHS 26: The Annual Report 2018. ([www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie))
- Initiation of Nurse Prescribing at GMHS
- Completion of the Sexual Health Advising course by nursing and outreach staff.
- Articles in EPI-Insight and Health Matters ([www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie) [www.healthmatters.ie](http://www.healthmatters.ie) ).
- Posters submitted to IDSI, SSSTDI and BASHH annual conferences.
- Oral and poster presentations at national and international meetings with nursing and outreach staff winning awards for presentations given.
- On-going staff training and in-service education to meet the needs of those accessing the service. Continued improvement of internal governance, policies, procedures and treatment guidelines.
- Provision of chemsex training to other organisations.
- Organised the 16th Annual Gay Health Forum at Dublin Castle along with GHN and supported by the Department of Health and the HSE.
- Continued to supply free condoms and lubricant at the GMHS clinic and through outreach as part of HIV prevention initiatives.
- Promoted awareness of HIV and STI testing services for MSM at LGBT Pride events and in GCN magazine and on social media.

## GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICE FOR MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

BAGGOT ST HOSPITAL, DUBLIN 4

T: +353 1 669 9553 F: +353 1 669 9597 E: [gmhsadmin@hse.ie](mailto:gmhsadmin@hse.ie)

W: [www.gmhs.ie](http://www.gmhs.ie) for Services, Reports and Links

- Expansion of the HPV vaccination clinic at GMHS to include service users up to the age of 45.
- Continued partnership with addiction services, Health and wellbeing and NGO's increasing awareness of chemsex and distribution of resources on G use. [www.drugs.ie/GHB](http://www.drugs.ie/GHB). In addition carrying out workshops for staff nationally in an effort to provide training.
- Delivery of Chemsex training to HSE and NGO staff.
- Development of the designated PrEP clinic at GMHS.



## GMHS IS MOVING:

The GMHS opened its first clinic in Baggot street Hospital over 26 years ago initially running one night per week. The service now provides clinics 4 days per week and has grown and developed beyond all expectations. Both staff and service users will be sad when the service moves out of this wonderful historic building but it will be great to develop and improve the current service in a new location.

## GMHS CLINIC OPENING TIMES:

	SERVICE OFFERED	TICKETS	CLINIC STARTS
Monday	No Symptoms Clinic Full STI Screen, Rapid HIV Test	1:15PM*	1:30PM
Tuesday	Full Service Clinic Full STI Screen Vaccines STI Treatment, PEP	4:00PM*	4PM: Nurse Services 6:00PM: Doctor Services
Wednesday	Full Service Clinic Full STI Screen Vaccines STI Treatment, PEP	4:00PM*	4PM: Nurse Services 6:00PM: Doctor Services
Thursday	PrEP Clinic PrEP Monitoring & Prescriptions	9:05AM*	9:30AM

\*Tickets are given for all available places at this time. Due to the limited number of places available we advise you to attend early. Services are offered on a first come first served basis. Once all available places have been filled we will be unable to accommodate anyone else for that clinic.

