

GMHS25



THE ANNUAL REPORT 2017 GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE, HSE

The Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) reached its 25th year of operation on October 6th 2017 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.



Celebrating 25 Years of The Gay Men's Health Service

GMHS celebrated its 25th year in operating in 2017 and in that time the service has facilitated over 100,000 patient visits. The service began on 6th of October 1992 nine months before decriminalisation of homosexuality by the Irish Government. The 25th anniversary of the service was marked by a celebration with HSE management, NGO's, statutory and voluntary organisations and community and staff past and present. Also in attendance was Minister Catherine Byrne T.D. Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for health promotion and the national drugs strategy who kindly gave the opening address.

2017 was a very busy year at GMHS with an overall increase of 32% 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 2017 of the 506 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 2017 there was also a reported 16% overall increase in Gonorrhoea infection detected nationally with 62% of those detections 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 with an action plan drafted for 2015 and 2016 to ensure work started immediately.

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) demonstrate that the HSE is fulfilling some of the indicators from the National Sexual Health Strategy. In 2017, 1257 men attended GMHS for the first time and a significant percentage had never tested previously for HIV (35%) or other STIs (43%) proving that the continuation of 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 2017

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PREP MONITORING CLINIC.

A pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) monitoring clinic was established in mid-November to facilitate people already accessing PrEP on line 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 diagnosis. Service users attending the GMHS PrEP clinic are offered a 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. PrEP is now available throughout Ireland in all community pharmacies with a prescription. The opening of this clinic has expanded STI testing services to 4 times weekly at GMHS. This clinic has proved extremely popular and is a brave and progressive step in HIV prevention in this cohort.

HPV VACCINE CLINIC.

A HPV vaccine clinic was introduced in April 2017 to deliver a targeted vaccination service to MSM age 26 and younger. Funding was allocated to the service from Sexual Health Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) to facilitate a part time HPV vaccine nurse to set up the service and monitor attendance ensuring those expressing interest completed the course. During the 8 months of operation in 2017 the clinic has administered 850 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 4¹ 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 men 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 2017 there were 9 Satellite clinics at Outhouse with 136 testing an average of 15 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 2017 68 individuals attended the GMHS counselling services. 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. Referrals come from GMHS Clinic, and the addiction services, Peter McVerry Trust, GPs and through the HSE website. The presenting issues vary from coming out, substance abuse, social isolation, difficulties in establishing or sustaining relationships, growing up in a family or homophobic society, coming to terms with HIV diagnosis. While some people have accessed other services before a substantial number of clients are attending for the first time. Attendees report coming to this service because they feel it would be easier to talk to someone without having to explain their lifestyle, where they feel they are seen in a non-judgemental environment.

OUTREACH AT GMHS

The GMHS MSM peer sexual health outreach team have developed a programme of outreach work and initiatives 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 and semi-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.

¹ <http://hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/gmhs/clinics/>

DIAGNOSIS AT GMHS 2017

In 2017 there were 150 clinics (51 weeks) and the demands on GMHS continued to increase with 9,725 men attending (1257 were first time attendees at GMHS).

There were approximately 1500 diagnoses of an STI in 2017, summarised as follows:

- 733 Gonorrhoea infections (GC) – a 49% increase on 2016 figures (31% were first time attendees to GMHS). 23% of patients were diagnosed with Gonorrhoea at 2 sites during 2017 while 7% 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, 58% Pharyngeal, 8% Urethral.
 - 10% of patients were treated for GC on two separate occasions during 2017 with 2% being treated on 3 separate occasions.
- 394 Chlamydia infections (CT) – an increase of 31% over 2016 (35% were first time attendees to GMHS). 16 % of patients were diagnosed with Chlamydia at two sites in 2017 while 1% were diagnosed with Chlamydia at 3 sites in that 12 month period
 - Where single site of infection was identified 58% of CT Infections were Rectal, 26% Urethral and 16% Pharyngeal.
 - 9% of patients were treated for CT on two separate occasions during 2017 with 1% being treated on 3 separate occasions.
- 69 HIV infections were diagnosed during 2017, 47 of these were first time diagnosis and were previously unaware, while 32% (22/69) had tested positive elsewhere. All patients diagnosed with HIV were linked to local services within 1-2 weeks of diagnosis. 60% were first time patients to GMHS. Of note 15% of new infections had tested negative within the previous 3 to 6 months with a further 20% testing negative within the previous year. For 15% of new diagnosis this was their first ever HIV test.
- 143 diagnosis of Syphilis – 11% were re- infections (54% were first time attendees to GMHS).
- Acute Hepatitis A and 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 2,151 preventative vaccines administered in 2017 for Hepatitis A and B rising to almost 3,000 when HPV vaccines are included.

There were 9,725 service users catered for in 2017 for a combination of assessments, screening, vaccinations and reviews and the results are contained in this report. The total figure represents a 32% increase in attendance on 2016 numbers.

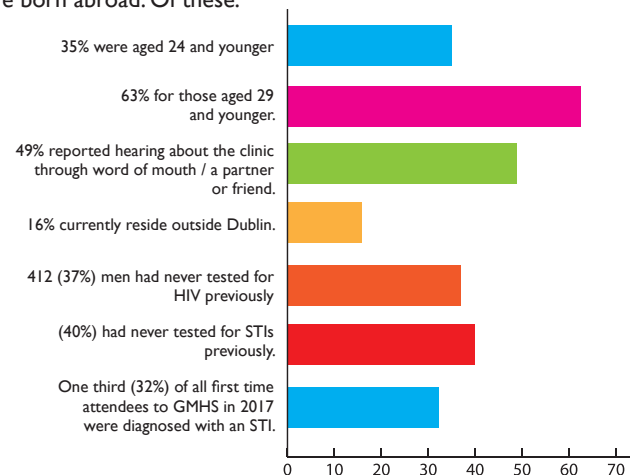
The increase in testing, detection, treatment and follow-up of positive results has significantly impacted on the staff and already limited resources of the GMHS.

PEP AT GMHS 2017

209 patients were prescribed Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) in 2017 (an increase of 9% compared to 2016). 31 (15%) patients were first time attendees to the clinic. 45% were Irish, 3% 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. 20% were between 48 and 72 hours from the exposure. 27% reported impaired judgement / being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at time of exposure. 45% were under the age of 30.

PATIENT'S FIRST PRESENTATION TO GMHS 2017

There were 1257 patients whose first ever presentation to the GMHS screening service was in 2017: an increase of 21% on the number of patients who presented to the service for the first time in 2016. 47% were born abroad. Of these:



ENHANCING ACCESS TO HIV AND STI TESTING 2017

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 Satellite service at Outhouse LGBT Community Centre, Capel St., Dublin 1 (held on the third Saturday of each Month)

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, GOSHH Limerick, Outhouse (LGBT+ Community Centre Dublin), Gay Switchboard Ireland, HIV Ireland, Positive Now and BeLonG To Youth Service amongst others. As co-manager GMHS sees the continued sustainability of the 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.

GMHS25



Innovation in Service Delivery Award* at the Health Service Excellence Awards 2017

AWARDS IN 2017

GMHS was recognised for its continued contribution to the sexual health and wellbeing of the MSM community receiving 3 awards in 2017. GMHS received the 'Innovation in Service Delivery Award' at the Health Service Excellence Awards 2017 at Farmleigh House for the nurse-led asymptomatic screening clinic. In addition, Siobhan O'Dea, Manager of GMHS was given an award of special recognition for 'Championing Diversity, Engagement and Inclusion' in the Health Service. The National LGBT Federation GALA Awards honoured the Gay Men's Health Service with an award for Best Online Initiative for using dating sites and apps for sexual health and wellbeing outreach work.

Other significant happenings for GMHS in 2017 were:

- Setting up of the HPV vaccination clinic at GMHS.
- 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. In addition carrying out workshops for staff nationally in an effort to provide training.
- Published GMHS 25: The Annual Report 2017. (www.gmhs.ie)
- Celebration of the 25th anniversary of GMHS and recognition of all of the hard work, commitment and determination of so many committed people over the years.
- Articles in EPI-Insight and Health Matters (www.hpsc.ie www.healthmatters.ie).
- Posters submitted to IDS1, SSSTD1 and BASHH annual conferences.



The National LGBT Federation GALA Awards honoured the Gay Men's Health Service with an award for Best Online Initiative

- Posters presented at national and international meetings.
- Organised the 15th 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.
- Winners of three awards for Outreach and HSE excellence awards.
- Delivery of Chemsex training to HSE and NGO staff.
- Setting up of designated PrEP clinic at GMHS

GMHS CLINIC OPENING TIMES:

Monday 2pm – 4pm	(asymptomatic nurse led clinic)
Tuesday & Wednesday from 4pm	(limited numbers allocated from 4pm, Doctor reviews start 6pm)
Wednesday from 4pm	(limited numbers allocated from 4pm, Doctor reviews start 6pm)
Thursday 10am - 12 midday	PrEP Clinic
HPV vaccination service as per immunisation guidelines.	
Outreach services - details available in clinic.	
Psychotherapy services – details available in clinic.	
Chemsex information and support services details available in clinic.	
Outhouse STI checkpoint clinic 3rd Saturday of every month.	

GAY MEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

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

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