

Networked >
the Northwest with All Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS



GM Run >
99 runners in our fittest sporting and fundraising entry



Waved >
farewell to Chief Executive Michelle as she moved to tackle tenant involvement



News

Start Treatment at a CD4 of 500?

Since modern HIV treatments first became available the best time to start treatment has shifted to sooner after infection. Around 10 years ago treatment started when CD4 had fallen to 200, but now treatment is started at 350.

This is set to become earlier - a series of studies are trying to work out the best start point for 2009 - and study results so far suggest British and other international treatment guidelines will soon advise to start when the CD4 falls to around 500.

Germans: Treatment is Prevention

Following the Swiss HIV clinicians statement in 2008 that effective HIV treatment is enough to prevent onward transmission to partners, the main German HIV community organisation *Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe* has made its own statement, with the same message.



In steady couples where one partner has HIV and the other doesn't, provided treatment is effective (viral load is undetectable for at least 6 months), and there are no sexually transmitted infections, the risk of HIV transmission is very low, equivalent to using condoms. The French national HIV organisation *Conseil National du SIDA* have also just issued their own, similar statement.

Testing Children

Don't Forget the Children, was a Children's HIV Association conference about testing the children of HIV positive adults. One child of positive parents, died recently. Although both the parents were being treated, their child was untested and was diagnosed just before dying, after a very sudden illness. This death was 'preventable'. With an unknown number of other undiagnosed HIV positive children across the country, the conference discussed how to increase testing, and agreed to work with parents to cut undiagnosed HIV among young people.

Gonorrhoea Prosecution

In an odd set of circumstances, a man has been convicted for passing on gonorrhoea to the two daughters of his partner. He was originally charged with child sex offences. Then with grievous bodily harm (GBH) at a retrial, for which he was convicted. The Court of Appeal reconsidered his sentencing and its judgement might affect people living with HIV.

Late last year the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) broke its own policy guidelines and got a conviction for hepatitis B transmission. Now it has repeated this and got a conviction for transmission of gonorrhoea.

The problem is not just the CPS repeatedly ignoring its own policy on GBH prosecutions for transmission, but the Appeal Court ruling seems to mean people with STIs, including HIV, have to use a condom. Neither the law nor guidelines have changed and we think they won't change. The law does not require people with HIV / STIs to use condoms. But if transmission happened and you had not told the partner about HIV before sex, proving you used condoms would be the best defence, if you were charged with GBH.

HIV Employment Equality Push

HIV and mental health charities want the Equality Bill changed to end the serious discrimination faced by job seekers with 'invisible' conditions, such as HIV and mental ill-health. Charities such as Terrence Higgins Trust, NAT (National AIDS Trust), and Rethink, a mental health charity, want all health-related questions banned, until after the job is offered.



At present, employers can ask people: - if they have a disability, - if they are taking medication, or - if they have a medical condition, even when the answers make no difference to their ability to do the job. These premature health questions allow "unacceptable under-the-counter discrimination" say the charities, and give a "licence to discriminate" to employers. Efforts are being made to add extra employment protection, before the Bill becomes law.

A change in the law would help to reduce discrimination and increase the number of people with HIV and mental illness working. One in ten employers withdraw job offers following the health-screening questionnaire. Seven per cent have sacked workers who have started work.

Hospital Pays for its Discrimination

Paying for HIV treatment is back in the news, with two court decisions and the announcement of a government review. First an NHS trust in Northern Ireland admitted that it was wrong to refuse a person with HIV medical treatment, has apologised, and paid £4000 compensation.



A £4000 NHS apology for disability discrimination for refusing to treat a man with HIV and a promise to do better

A man was refused an endoscopy at Craigavon hospital, Portadown. He complained of disability discrimination - it is illegal to discriminate against anyone with HIV. Apart from the £4000 and an apology, the hospital now has to convince the Equalities Commission that it treats people living with HIV fairly.

Migrants Treatment - Hopes Rising

Almost a year after the High Court said most migrants are entitled to free NHS hospital treatment, the Appeal Court reversed that ruling. However a Department of Health minister has now promised in the House of Lords that the legal regulations will be reviewed for HIV. This is the most promising news on HIV treatment rights for migrants for several years.

Although the Appeal Court decided there is no legal right to treatment, they did rule that the official Department of Health Guidelines are unlawful. The Guidelines will be revised this Autumn, and we expect free treatment for people who cannot return home.

The House of Lords heard the health minister announce that they would now review the Regulations, as well as the Guidance. This should help many people with HIV. Baroness Thornton said "I emphasise that we recognise and respect fully our duty to ensure that the provision of healthcare is fully compliant with human rights principles."

We hope the Department does at last deliver for everyone in the country the "highest attainable standard of health." This is what the government promised in 1976 when we signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Governments have failed to make this part of our own law. It is time to make that highest health standard real for everyone living with HIV.

Thank you for your support

Please return to:
George House Trust
FREEPOST NWW-1004
Manchester M12 9GH

Using a stamp will save George House Trust money.

How you can help

Please send me information on:

- Services for people with HIV
- Making a donation
- Volunteering
- Fundraising

Name:

Address:

.....

Phone:

E-mail:

Donate, volunteer and more information online at

www.ght.org.uk

registered charity 700364

George House Trust

is the HIV voluntary organisation for North West England.

We provide support to people living with HIV, and to carers and dependent children affected by HIV. We campaign for the best quality of life for all people with HIV.

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Editors: Katherine Moulder and Chris Morley

Insight is available by e-mail, and on tape for people with HIV who prefer this.

Subscribe at

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insight

George House Trust / Summer 2009 / Issue 48

into HIV in North West England



HIV Support Needs in 2009

We examine the changing and unchanging needs of people living with HIV, and how at least half the people with HIV received no help with their biggest problems

2009 HIV Support Needs

Multiple complex needs are widespread and unmet



Stuart takes the lead

New Chief Executive Stuart McQuade starts in June



Our Sports Day and Running in Manchester

Fitter with Sports Day and Great Manchester Run



Positively speaking out

Face to face talks by people living with HIV make all the difference to stigma. Kath Morgan, positive speaker coordinator, reveals our inspiring Positive Speakers' work

Challenging HIV-related stigma, the *Positive Speaker* programme was launched in summer 2008, deliberately to dispel HIV myths and raise awareness of the reality of living with HIV. It does this through powerful personal 'real life' presentations. The pilot stage ended in March.

There were 32 sessions in our pilot, for a wide range of groups including schools, further education colleges, healthcare and social care professionals and trainees.

Impactful

How did the talks go? We measured the impact with audience questionnaires, before and after the talks, asking people to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with eight statements. We looked at people's attitudes towards who is at risk, life with HIV, the rights of positive people, and working and being friends with people living with HIV. What people told us shows that as people listen and learn, their knowledge and attitudes towards HIV positive people significantly improve through hearing the *Positive Speakers*.

The most positive changes were in how long a life the audience believed people living with HIV could expect to have now, whether people should be sexually active with HIV, and the right to HIV confidentiality at work. Most impressive were groups of further education college students whose attitudes improved dramatically with just one session.

Face to Face Works

"When you hear the stories of people with HIV, you can understand it more. It made me see it differently."

What the findings demonstrate is that face to face contact with a person living with HIV, is one of the most



The audience looking thoughtful as it listens to one of the Positive Speakers, during the launch event earlier this year

effective tools in combating stigma. Facts and figures don't always resonate, but hearing someone tell their personal story provides a strong emotional connection that makes a deep difference.

Speakers sign up and train for different reasons: wanting to encourage safer sex and prevent others becoming HIV positive; to show people that life with HIV can be a great deal better than they think; to challenge the prejudice and stereotypes of who is at HIV risk; and to empower themselves. Whatever their reasons, speakers feel empowered by talking about their status openly and by being able to directly challenge HIV-related stigma.

Watching the attitudes of the listeners change from misinformed and prejudiced, to being aware, informed and even speaking out against HIV stigma, is an inspiring experience for the speakers and others involved.

There's been a strikingly positive impact, not only on the attitudes of those hearing the *Positive Speakers'*

testimonies, but also on the speakers themselves. Positive Speakers is out of the pilot stage and now going from strength to strength, with additional speakers now being recruited.

"I feel better about myself since starting Positive Speaking. It has changed my view of myself and made me feel more positive generally."

Secrets and Lives

Details of the Positive Speaker Programme, how to make a booking, and on becoming a speaker are at www.gh.t.org.uk or ask Kath at kath@gh.t.org.uk, or on 0161 274 4499. See and hear for yourselves at our Manchester Pride showcase *'Secrets and Lives: Coming out of the HIV closet'* at the Frog and Bucket Comedy Club, on Wednesday August 26th - details and tickets at our website.

Key achievements in recent months

Appointed >
new Chief Executive,
Stuart McQuade who
starts on 15 June



Relaxed >
23 adults and children at
the May African Away
weekend - which 54
people wanted to attend



Editorial

Lynda Shental

Together, Shoulder to Shoulder

Life here with HIV has changed dramatically in 10 years. Modern treatments have increased life expectancy and quality. Sadly, the stigma and discrimination people face has not changed as dramatically in this time.

Here in the North West, HIV positive people are speaking out against stigma and discrimination. We are so proud of the difference Positive Speakers Programme has made this year.

As Speakers, HIV positive people play a vital role in tackling the myths and ideas people have about being HIV positive. The speakers are well trained, skilled and highly motivated. They have a massive impact. Nothing changes people's perceptions more than actually seeing, listening to, and talking with someone who has HIV.

Inspiring other positive people, our Speakers are leading the way - showing others how you can be more open about their status. Telling others, disclosing, is not usually about standing in front of a big group and talking about your life. For most of us it means telling a partner, friends, parents, work-mates, family, lover.

Anyone with HIV can be a little more open about HIV and change people's perceptions. Being more open about HIV is not for everyone, all the time, everywhere. Most people choose good places and times to be open.

George House Trust is here to support people in disclosing as they choose. We offer specialist support as well, for instance if you are telling your employer.

Disclosure is an incredibly powerful tool for tackling the myths and stigma that positive people face.

In my own words...

Lyn - a woman positive speaker, in her early 30s

How did you find out about George House Trust?

My consultant suggested contacting them for support.

What led you to train as a Positive Speaker?

I heard about it at the Women's Space. HIV is not talked about openly enough to challenge stigma.

How has speaking publicly helped you?

It gives me a real sense of achievement that a lot more people are being reached, who otherwise wouldn't know anything about HIV. They would be living in their own bubble, thinking it will never happen to them, just like I was before I was diagnosed. Fictional characters, like on Hollyoaks, are very removed. It's very different to have someone stood in front of you saying I've got HIV. When it's a real person in the flesh, they can relate to you and to your experiences. The impact of the speakers is amazing; you can see the attitudes changing.

The Positive Speakers Programme helped me to stand up and talk about HIV. It also gives me a better idea of how people see it, of the naivety out there. People still have very stereotypical views; it's good to be able to challenge these and breakdown the stigma.

It's also been great for making positive friends, and the meetings and training give me more opportunities to just be myself. People genuinely care about you at George House Trust, because they can relate to you.

What message would you give to other positive people?

I would tell them "come to George House Trust, it's all wonderful!" I would tell them about the services and the spaces. HIV will get better and easier from when you're first diagnosed. What I've learnt is that as bad as it may seem, you can get as much out of it, as it takes out of you. HIV is living with me now rather than me living with it. Embrace it and accept it, because it's here to stay, so just get the most out of it. I now go to George House Trust because I enjoy going, and giving something back.

Hopes for the future

A long and prosperous speakers programme! What I really want is for people with HIV to be openly accepted and not discriminated against, so that I can live my life as I would otherwise do. I'm happy as I am, HIV doesn't really affect me, but other people make it affect me.



21st Century HIV Support Needs

HIV policy expert Chris Morley investigates what HIV support people need, as revealed in Sigma Research's latest report **What do you need?**

Some things have changed, but in most areas of life similar proportions of people living with HIV have similar needs for support to 7 or 8 years ago.

About 2000 people completed an online and booklet survey with 10% living in Northwest England, roughly the same as the region's share of people living with HIV nationally. We appreciate the help of all who completed the survey at our website or by booklet.

The survey looked at HIV medical, social care, support and information needs. It asked about 20 issues - from sex to housing, immigration to discrimination, anxiety and depression to the world of work. It asked if people have problems in these areas. There may be no solution to some problems, but there are potentially dozens of ways to help.

Needs into Services

You cannot covert this study of complex and diverse HIV needs into a simple recipe for services. Commissioning of services by the NHS and councils have to deal with the complexities and interrelatedness of many needs. We see a picture of many people with complex interlocking needs. These require many people and organisations to contribute to eliminating the problems, at source as far as possible, and by reducing the harm, or by untangling the net of problems around people.

We can also see that although most people have some problems with HIV each year, there are some who report no problems, and many who report that things have improved over the last year.

HIV services can take much of the credit for this improvement, but people with HIV are resourceful in sorting out many problems, and have friends, partners and family, who provide valuable support and help in this.

However it is very clear that many people don't get all the help they need. While some people don't like to 'make a fuss,' or feel a failure if they ask for help, other people don't know where to go for help and solutions. Often what people need is creativity and thinking outside the box - while we can't increase national benefit rates to end a money problem, we can provide emergency financial help, check if people are claiming all they are entitled to, offer support to help people back into paid work, supply information about claiming tax credits, and help people manage their income, bills and debts better.

Mental Ill-health Tops List

Anxiety and depression, self-esteem, sleep and sex are the areas of life that pose problems to the greatest number of people living with HIV in the UK.

The groups reporting the most problems were women, Africans, haemophiliacs, injecting drug users, and people with immigration problems. A quarter of all women surveyed reported having problems with between 13 and 19 of the 20 problems in the last year. 43% of people with immigration problems had 11 - 19 of the 20 problems. The average gay man had 7 of the 20 problems, and 12% reported 13 or more problems in the previous year.

Whoever it is, and whatever the problems, we need solutions tailored to suit the whole situation. Services often need to look for underlying problems (low self-esteem and depression) rather than reaching for a sticking plaster for the symptoms - a relationship in difficulties.

Sometimes the sticking point is not talking about the problem. For others it is hard to ask for help. There is no shame in either. HIV community services and clinics have seen every variety of problem and some support is always available, if not a complete solution.

Our services team are keen to offer whatever help we can support@ght.org.uk and please use our range of online services www.ghnt.org.uk

Highlighted >
 Women and HIV at International Women's Day event, in Manchester Town Hall



Perfected >
 Volunteers training - now 98% recommend volunteering at George House Trust



Supported >
 National Condom Week by promoting our Condoms by Post service at all services



Fundraising News

£100 a mile marathon



On this very sunny April morning, Nick Eaton and Jono Guildford ran the 26.2 mile London marathon in aid of George House Trust, and both completed it in just over 4 hours. Between them they raised £2600 for George House Trust - £100 a mile. Thank you, and to all their sponsors.

Great Manchester Run 99



99 runners at least took to Manchester's streets in the 2009 Great Manchester Run, raising pounds along the way for George House Trust. We'd like to say a huge thank you to all our runners for putting themselves through the miles to raise much needed funds. Their many sponsors enthused the runners and supported us. We'll announce the total raised next issue and on our website - we know it will be over £5000. Even though the run has finished you can still show your support for our team, at www.justgiving.com/gmrgeorgehoustrust

Pantomime Pounds

Big thanks to the Bury Grammar School for boys and the staff who braved the stage for the annual staff pantomime. The pantomime pounds went to various charities, and we are delighted with the donation of £430.

Our Sports Day

Alongside **Pride Sports** and **Open Athletics** we've organised a sports day in Longford Park, Stretford, Manchester for Saturday July 11th.

All service users and volunteers are welcome to join and enjoy a fun-packed day. There will be coached taster sessions for various activities, track and field events, and fun races and soccer skills for children. Bring a picnic or use the park cafe. Contact lynda@ght.org.uk to find out more. Longford Park is close by Stretford tram stop, and has frequent buses - 16, 22, 23, 276, 297.



News About Us

Volunteer with the Keen Team!

98% of our volunteers recommend volunteering at George House Trust. Could you become one of them? We are now recruiting for our next induction course, at the end of July.

"A great organisation to volunteer for ... the right balance of give and take, professional, supportive and receptive to change. Embracing of diversity and cultures. Makes George House Trust a good place to be!"

Mentors, drivers, counsellors - a definite plus

If you have good communication skills, are well organised, motivated, and want to help people live full, independent lives with HIV, please get in touch.

We are particularly keen to find volunteer mentors, drivers and fully qualified volunteer counsellors, to join our established team. All volunteers have a thorough induction and receive continuing training, support and travel expenses. If you are interested in volunteering, come along to our next Volunteer Information Session on Wednesday 17th June, 6pm-8pm, at George House Trust. Discover more about quality volunteering opportunities at George House Trust from our website at www.ghst.org.uk

Welcome to Stuart

George House Trust is pleased to announce Stuart McQuade will be our new Chief Executive.

Stuart replaces Michelle Reid who left to become Chief Executive with the national organisation - Tenant Participation Advisory Service. Stuart will start work in mid June. He brings with him a strong background in the HIV sector and he'll ensure we continue to provide excellent services to people living with and affected by HIV in the North West of England.

Membership

If you are a service user or volunteer and would like to get more involved in the running of George House Trust, you could become a member.

Members are invited to the Annual General Meeting, and can stand for election to become a Trustee. At the Annual General Meeting members are also asked to vote on any major strategic decisions affecting the charity.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact katherine@ght.org.uk or visit our website membership page <http://tinyurl.com/dmavfv>

Pride Event - Secrets and Lives

As part of Manchester Pride, **Secrets and Lives - coming out of the HIV Closet** - is a presentation by George House Trust of personal perspectives on living with HIV. Intimate, honest, challenging, this event aims to open your eyes to the reality and diversity of the lives of people living with HIV in the UK today. It's at the Frog & Bucket comedy club on Wednesday 26 August 7.30 - 10pm. Tickets £4, concessions £1 - advanced booking advised at our website www.ghst.org.uk. More information kath@ght.org.uk

What's Coming Up..

20 June, 18 July, 15 August, 19 September

Saturday Space from 1pm to 4pm is George House Trust's service bringing all the diversity of our service users together. Food and travel expenses provided. Activities and speakers most months - see website diary or flyers. Details from jill@ght.org.uk

9 & 23 June, 7 & 21 July, 4 & 18 August, 1 September

Women's Space is on Tuesdays every two weeks between 12 noon and 2.30pm. Food, crèche and travel expenses all provided. Details of activities and speakers on our flyers and our website diary. dunkan@ght.org.uk

2, 16 & 30 June, 14 & 28 July, 4, 11 & 25 August

African Service meets every two weeks on Tuesdays at 12 noon to 2.30pm, with food, crèche and travel expenses. African men meet separately here every two months, and next meet on 14 July. Special activities include 2 June: Fashion Show; 16 June: Refugee Week event; 30 June: Education, and for others check our website diary, or please ask durani@ght.org.uk

1, 8, 15, 22, 29 June, 6, 13, 20, 27 July, 3, 10, 17, & 24 August

Gay Men's Space is weekly on Monday evenings between 5pm and 8pm (but we are closed on 31 August - Bank Holiday Monday). Food and travel expenses provided. Ask dunkan@ght.org.uk for details.

4 - 6 September

African Away Weekend starts on Friday evening and finishes late Sunday afternoon. African services users and children go away for the weekend, relax and enjoy the company and support. We book a beautiful house in the Cheshire hills, at Mellor, Stockport. There are special booking forms for this weekend. Ask durani@ght.org.uk



2 September, for 5 weeks, in Lancaster

Newly Diagnosed Course for Gay and Bisexual Men starts Wednesday evening and runs for 5 weeks. Men must have been diagnosed with HIV within the 12 last months. This George House Trust course is touring North West England with funding from Elton John Aids Foundation, and the next is in Lancaster. Bookings: colin@ght.org.uk or please call 0161 274 4499.

11 July

George House Trust Sports Day mixes lots of fun activities with sports competitions at Trafford Athletics Club, Longford Park, between Stretford and Chorlton. Children welcome and bring a picnic. Contact lynda@ght.org.uk

Donation

We rely on your generosity to continue our work supporting people with HIV.

Regular Donation

I would like to donate £ every to support the work of George House Trust.

Bank address:

Sort code:

Account number:

Signed

To: George House Trust / Sort 16-00-01 / Account 20034936

Single Donation

Please find enclosed a cheque (payable to George House Trust) for £

Online Donation

Please donate online at: www.ghst.org.uk

Tick here if you pay tax (and you pay more tax than the amount of your donation). This means we can claim an extra amount from the tax office in addition to your donation.

Please ensure you have filled in your address details overleaf.

Thank you for your support