

Gay Men's Health

***Annual Report
2009/2010***



Over the past 12 months Gay Men's Health has continued to develop and expand its services across Scotland. A focus on sexual health, HIV prevention, support for men living with HIV and emotional wellbeing continues to be the cornerstone of our work. But it is by no means the only work undertaken by our large volunteer force. The amount of work undertaken is too much to even begin to fit in an Annual Report, and what is contained here is a taster of some of the key successes of the past 12 months.

In the past 12 months the largest expansion in the work we are undertaking has been that of young gay and bisexual men. Our work in colleges and universities has expanded dramatically thanks to new funding, and our new media and internet work has brought into the organisation young people with fresh ideas.

One of the things we are particularly proud of is our approach to working in partnership, both with other voluntary organisations as well as the statutory sector. Partnership working is more than turning up to a meeting together or having joint logos on a resource. Our approach is to put our energies into leading our partners and undertaking the work jointly with them, and there are a large number of individuals and organisations we have worked with. In particular our close working ties with NHS Lothian and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has meant the development of work that will mean a unified approach to prevention work for gay and bisexual men across the central belt. We would like to see that approach extended to all gay and bisexual men in Scotland in the future.

Much is made of the Gay Men's Health ethos and it is something that people hear again and again about our community approach.

I however, make no apologies for repeating that it is volunteers from the gay communities that undertake the work outlined in this report. It is to those volunteers that the thanks of gay and bisexual men in the areas that we cover must go.

Bruce Fraser
Chief Executive

Counselling

Gay Men's Health offers a professional, confidential counselling service for gay and bisexual men in both Lothian and Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The service is free or by donation. The Lothian service has been established for over ten years, and the GGC service became operational in May 2009 after the award of funding from the Janek Latosinski Trust in February 2009. The GGC service was initially for men living with HIV and their partners, but this has now been broadened out to all gay and bisexual men, thanks to donations received.

Short and long-term individual and couple counselling is provided by a team of 15 counsellors (12 in Lothian and 3 in GGC) all of whom are either Diploma qualified or students on a Diploma Course. Many of our counsellors have been with the organisation for several years and they all bring a wealth of mental health, counselling and life experience to the counselling work. They see a minimum of 2 clients per week, and are provided with professional supervision both individual and in groups. Gay Men's Health is an organisational member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and adheres to its 'Ethical Framework for Good Practice'.

Clients approach our counselling services with many and varied issues, - anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sexuality, sexual risk taking, recent diagnosis or living with HIV, addictions, bereavement, relationships, abuse.

All clients self refer, many come to us through the website or information from the gay scene, and others are recommended to contact GMH by their GPs, or other NHS services such as the GUM clinic, ROAM in Edinburgh and the Brownlee Centre in Glasgow. Clients are seen 7-10 days after contacting the service for an initial appointment, this has proved an invaluable first step in the process and means that if men have to wait for regular counselling they have been seen and familiarised themselves with GMH, and can if necessary be signposted to practical help. It may also be appropriate for them to be given information about our Together or Prime Time groups or a volunteer application pack.

Service evaluation is an essential part of running and maintaining a professional counselling service. Gay Men's Health uses the CORE (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation) system. This is widely used in the NHS and other counselling services, and is an invaluable tool for assessing risk to clients, and to measure the impact counselling has on their psychological distress. This system also provides us with information regarding who (age/ethnicity) is accessing the service and how they hear about us. This allows us to develop ideas for further and more extensive promotion of the service.

During this year Gay Men's Health delivered 1130 counselling sessions and carried out initial appointments for 59 new clients.



HIV prevention and the HIV Comeback Tour Campaign

Gay Men's Health continues to play a central role in the HIV Comeback Tour Campaign, the biggest HIV prevention campaign held in Lothian for 10 years. In partnership with NHS Lothian and other organisations, we recently launched Phase 3 of this multi-faceted community based campaign, the aims of which are to:

- raise awareness and knowledge of HIV amongst gay and bisexual men
- to encourage and promote the use condoms for anal sex and regular HIV testing

The campaign is based on research undertaken by GMH and the Medical Research Council Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, and builds on the work done by the Testing & Support Project at GMH. Phase 3 of the campaign develops the themes of Phase 2 and encourages us to challenge assumptions we make about HIV status and transmission. The campaign messages focus on condoms as our best protection against HIV transmission and regular HIV testing. Gay Men's Health volunteers have been involved in every aspect of the campaign including providing regular peer education sessions in Edinburgh's gay venues and staffing the Comeback Tour stall at various events in the city.



Together

'Together' is a group for gay and bisexual men living with HIV that meets on the second and last Tuesday of each month in Glasgow. The group organises a variety of activities including discussions, workshops and days out. The current programme includes speakers on counselling, keeping fit and HIV and the law. Members decide the issues and topics in a friendly and inclusive environment. New members are always welcome and are invited to come along 30 minutes before the group meetings for an informal chat with the facilitator.



In partnership with other organisations, Gay Men's Health organises an annual residential training weekend for gay and bisexual men living with HIV. This year's residential was held in Stirling and was attended by 18 men. The theme of the weekend was "HIV and Relationships" and it examined how HIV can impact on the many different relationships we have, including professional, medical, social and sexual.

Gay Men's Health is actively involved in planning for Gaycon 2010 – the third national conference for Scotland on gay and bisexual men's health and wellbeing. The conference will be held in October 2010 in Edinburgh and will be opened by the Scottish Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison. It will also include keynote addresses by Peter Tatchell, Paul Flowers, Yusef Azad and Lesley Wallace.

Prime Time is a volunteer led group for gay and bisexual men over 40 years old. The Edinburgh group has been active for 6 years and was used as a model for the Glasgow group, which started in September 2007. The groups have an open door policy and meet fortnightly. The meetings are very informal and provide a social space and discussion forum. Groups discuss topics of interest to members and in Edinburgh have acted as a focus group to test materials for the HIV Comeback Tour. The Edinburgh group is also represented on the LGBT Older People's forum organised by Age Concern Scotland. Regular social activities undertaken included coffee afternoons, trips to the theatre, visits to places of interest, Christmas and other parties.



Connected

Gay Men's Health, in partnership with other agencies organises and delivers the national programme of work with HIV positive gay and bisexual men known as Connected Scotland.

The group is currently reviewing the comprehensive information pack for gay and bisexual men newly diagnosed with HIV in Scotland and has updated the interactive website that provides information for gay and bisexual men living with HIV.

Connected Scotland has also developed a programme of workshops and training events for gay and bisexual men living with HIV based on topics suggested by the men themselves and has included sessions on criminalisation of HIV transmission and healthy living workshops.

Smoking Cessation

Gay Men's Health in partnership with the LGBT Centre for Health & Wellbeing, ran a successful smoking cessation programme targeted specifically at LGBT communities in the NHS Lothian area. The course took place in April-May 2009 and was attended by 8 participants. NHS Lothian carries out follow-up work with course participants.

Police Surgery

Since September 2009 Gay Men's Health in Glasgow has held a 'Police Surgery' on the last Wednesday of every month. Not only does this allow the LGBT community to report incidents to the police but since the surgery falls on the same night as volunteer induction sessions, it also allows officers to speak to the new volunteers about third party reporting and the relationship the police have with the community.

Spectrum Group

The Gay Men's Health Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Community Development Group has chosen a group name 'Spectrum' and it has met initially twice monthly, then once monthly as a day to welcome new volunteers. Meeting dates currently have relatively small numbers attending. There have been six members involved within the Spectrum group this year.

Gay and bisexual men from BME communities do not all personally identify with terms such as gay, bisexual or BME, and it is best to welcome new members to the group without assumptions of having knowledge of gay culture or sexual health information. It is important that we assure confidentiality and create a safe place for meeting, developing work and linking with local agencies.

Community Development

The concept of peer education is absolutely central to the way we work at Gay Men's Health. It is a highly effective form of information sharing whereby people with shared experiences and similar outlooks on life can assist one another in taking control of issues that affect them. We firmly believe that the best placed people to inform gay and bisexual men are gay and bisexual men themselves.

With this in mind, we train gay and bisexual male volunteers to talk with their peers about a wide range of issues. These can include active promotion of regular STI / HIV testing, community consultation on new campaigns and developing areas of work, correct condom use and hepatitis A and B vaccinations.

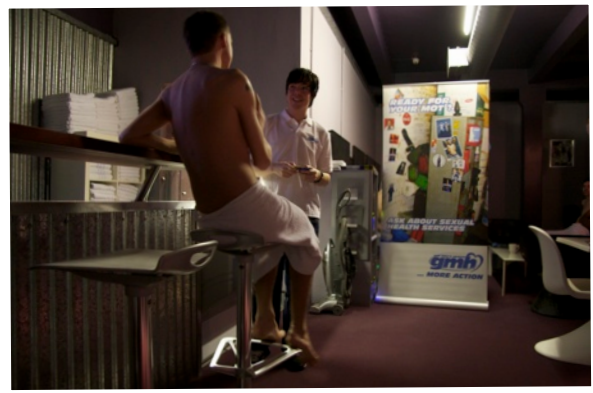
We also ensure that outreach work is co-ordinated to compliment the work of partner agencies. A good example of this is our online peer education work, which is carried out under an umbrella of six organisations called the Scottish Netreach Network (SNN). GMH continues to play a key role within this Network.

Targeted peer education work with young gay men involves new media and the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Recon, Fitlads, LadsLads, Slaveboys and podcast development work on information videos for upload onto Youtube and iTunes.



Peer education is most successful when it takes place in areas where large numbers of gay and bisexual men come together to meet. To this end our trained volunteers currently work in gay bars, clubs, on gay internet sites such as Gaydar and in the active promotion of the community-based testing in saunas.

Peer educators were key in developing an outreach approach based on the principles of motivational interviewing. Experienced outreach volunteers now use this approach on the commercial gay scene. Having established a good rapport with the men they meet, they will ask a set of specific questions or deliver specific goal focused statements. The aim here is to create a well-informed community norm, with the intention of volunteers presenting their peers with an issue for deliberation or an opportunity to examine their own thoughts, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes (sometimes referred to as an "internal critique"). Specifically, we have used this technique to encourage men to think about their own safer sex practices and testing behaviour.



Young Men's Work

Since November 2009, Gay Men's Health in Glasgow has been funded to undertake work with young gay and bisexual men. Two workers have been employed, one covering Internet & New Media work, the other concentrating on work with students in Higher & Further Education establishments.

The major goal of this work is recruitment of additional young volunteers to augment existing volunteers within GMH.

Internet & New Media

Internet & New Media work has focussed on identifying those social networking sites used by young gay and bisexual men. A GMH presence has been established on various sites, and these pages are updated on a regular basis with information on work and campaigns that GMH is involved in, as well as information on safer sex.

Work has also started on using a range of other new media opportunities, including online blogs and vlogs (video logs) and discussion forums. This work is at an early stage and will be fully developed in 2010/11.

Work is also ongoing towards developing GMH smartphone applications.

Higher & Further Education (H&FE)

Work in this sector initially concentrated on identifying H&FE establishments in the NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde area. Links were established with existing LGBT Societies and a range of condoms and lubricant, as well as safer sex resources, were provided. Where LGBT Societies do not exist, student officers with an LGBT or equality remit, or staff members with a similar role, were identified and contacted.

During financial year 2009/10, the following numbers of condoms and lubricant were distributed to H&FE establishments:

Condoms	Lubricant (sachets)	Lubricant (bottles)	Dental Dams
10,784	4,150	346	240

Over 60% of the material distributed was directly as the result of contacts made by the H&FE worker between November 2009 and the end of March 2010.

Work has also started towards the production of printed resources, including a student magazine and creating a peer support network. These areas will be further developed and implemented in 2010/11.

Volunteer Hours

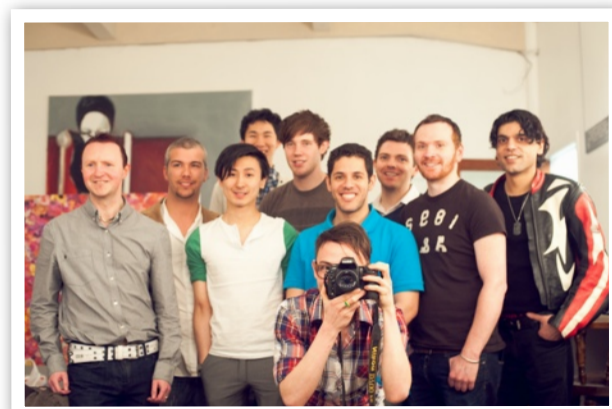
Peer education volunteers in both Glasgow and Edinburgh have spent 743 hours in gay scene venues to promote sexual health screening for HIV and other STIs. Peer educators continue to be conscientious and enthusiastic in their work, all having participated in face-to-face training sessions to develop their skills in approachability, motivational interview techniques and dealing with conflict.

**total volunteer hours
for 2009/10**

8,170

Within Glasgow saunas, 174 hours of peer education, resulted in 465 interactions being made. Main points raised and discussed involved promotion of six-monthly HIV and STI testing, opportunities for on-site testing within sauna, HIV prevalence, risk behaviour and involvement within GMH. Points raised from sauna contacts included transmission risks for HIV & STIs in relation to oral sex. There has been good support for GMH peer work and the development of the community based sexual health testing service.

Volunteers invested 1,426 hours in the development of media stock, articles and photos used in the production of the GM8 Community Magazine, GMH Website and organisational profiles on community social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.



Volunteers provided 467 hours of internet outreach work resulting in high quality in-depth interactions, most being from the Lothian and Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area. Issues discussed were mostly in relation to six-monthly sexual health screening and sexual health services within Edinburgh and Glasgow. Interactions involved deeper discussions of HIV testing, risk and transmission.

Two young men's new media volunteers were recruited in Glasgow and information sequences from recent Podcasts were uploaded as shorter and more accessible resources on to Youtube and iTunes. 114 hours were spent by volunteers working on new media within this period. Uploading shorter sequences was based on feedback on the original format of Podcasts suggesting the reduction of each podcast to one or two minutes and to repackage most of the original pieces into shorter, attractive "... more click-able" and venue-friendly segments.

Our dedicated volunteers have given their time in many other roles including counselling, training, office support, condom deliveries and events. We recognise and value the hard work and support they continue to show us.

gmh.org.uk Website

This year has seen a major reworking of the organisation's website, and a great deal of time has been invested in its development. All work has been done "in house", utilising the skills of gay and bisexual men involved in the organisation.

There are currently over 150 pages, most of which sits within the "Useful Information" section, which offers a broad range of helpful resources for gay and bisexual men. This includes sections on HIV and Testing, Condoms, and Relationships.

The most popular area of the site is "The Good Gay Sex Guide"! This gives information on how to make sex more enjoyable, whilst giving clear information on how to minimise risks.

The website also gives details about Gay Men's Health, its history and ethos, contact staff, apply to become a volunteer, set up a counselling session and even ask questions anonymously about subjects such as gay sex and sexual health.

The site takes advantage of popular social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, allowing users to share interesting content easily with their friends. Gay Men's Health also has a strong presence on the most popular social networking sites themselves, allowing users to keep up to date with what's going on at GMH and usefully interact with us.

This year the site has had over 60,000 visitors, with over 170,000 page views. Whilst Edinburgh and Glasgow were the two most popular locations from which our site was viewed, we really have been visited from (and we hope, provided help to) gay and bisexual men all over the world.



**60,000 Website
visitors and
170,000 page
views**

GM8 Magazine

GM8, our sexual health focussed community magazine, is written, designed and distributed by GMH volunteers.

The magazine aims to promote good sexual health amongst gay and bisexual men in an informative and engaging way. This is done by working closely with our volunteering team here at GMH and other community and partner organisations. This allows GMH to produce a resource that is representative of the gay community.

GM8 takes particular pride in the fact that many of our models come from the many diverse members of our community. Whether that be young or old, black or white, fat or thin, our models are the community that we want to appeal to.

During 2009/10, 4 editions of GM8 were published with a minimum circulation of 4,000 per edition, these editions are then distributed to the venues used by gay and bisexual men in both cities. A further 1,374 hits were made on the GM8 website which contains all the editions of the magazine.

The content of the articles produced included information on a range of STIs (syphilis, genital warts, Hepatitis B and chlamydia); tips on correct condom and lubricant use; the importance of going for regular sexual health checkups; the different types of relationships that gay men have; information for men living with HIV; and articles focussing on the wider aspects of the health and wellbeing of gay and bisexual men. Each edition is complemented by our regular problem pages, our scene guide and maps which highlight where gay and bisexual men can access condoms and lube, as well as the locations of the HIV and STI testing centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow.



Condoms & lube

The distribution of condoms and lube continues to be one of the most important services provided by Gay Men's Health. Volunteers distribute materials to bars, clubs and saunas in Glasgow and bars and clubs in Edinburgh.

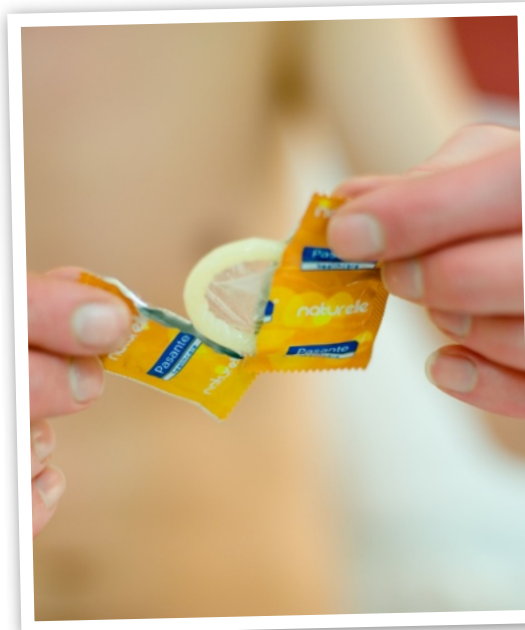
There are a number of strong arguments to suggest that free condom and lubricant distribution is one of the most effective HIV prevention initiatives available.

1. **Unity/Disunity balance:** For each sexual encounter the decision to have, or not have, safer sex will be the result of a mental balancing up between the perceived utility of having safer sex (e.g. avoiding infection) and the perceived disutility (e.g. it feels less intimate). The more effort safer sex is, the more the balance will be weighted towards disutility, and the more unsafe sex is likely to occur. Free, easily accessible condoms greatly reduce the effort involved in having safer sex, and so significantly shift the balance back.

2. Having condoms very visibly available at those venues where sexual contacts are likely to be made can be a powerful reminder to those men who are lapsing in their decisions to always have safer sex.

3. Providing free condoms in community settings helps to reinforce the idea that safer sex is an expected behaviour.

4. Providing free condoms and lubricant along with relevant information increases condom knowledge and reduces condom failure.



In both cities the main way of providing materials is via a system of bar-jars and condom dispensers containing loose condoms and sachets of lubricant. This enables men to choose the correct amount of lubricant they need while reducing the waste associated with condom packs, such as unused materials and packaging. Condom packs, containing two condoms and two sachets of lubricant, as well as relevant sexual health information, are used for outreach work and during events, such as Pride.

In financial year 2009/10, GMH volunteers distributed 297,478 condoms, 276,068 sachets of lube and 4,855 bottles of lubricant to our to gay and bisexual men in Glasgow; and 110,494 condoms and 98,510 sachets of lube to gay and bisexual men in Edinburgh.

***Over 7,200 condoms
and sachets of
lubricant
distributed in
Glasgow &
Edinburgh each
week***

Events

Over the last year, volunteers have promoted the work of the organisation through events. In Edinburgh, there was a range of themed events in venues on the commercial gay scene, including a volunteer recruitment event in Café Habana and two events in the Newtown Bar, one of which was run jointly with BearScots. In Glasgow, events that took place included a Hallowe'en ceilidh, a Boot Camp army themed night at Revolver bar, and World AIDS Day events linked to a range of venues including Delmonica's Bar. As well as providing an opportunity to hand out safer sex information and materials, events are an important source of raising the profile of the organisation and for volunteer recruitment. Gay Men's Health also had a significant presence at Pride Scotia in Edinburgh.



Resources

In Edinburgh, GMH resource volunteers played a significant part in supporting the HIV Comeback Tour with particular emphasis upon distributing and maintaining the campaign presence throughout the commercial gay scene. Additional resources produced in Edinburgh included a new condom resource and reprint of volunteer recruitment.

In Glasgow, a range of different resources were produced. These included, publicity material for the Prime Time group, a series of three resources promoting HIV testing, a reprint of the GMH sexual health MOT resource, and a flyer promoting the BME Spectrum initiative. In addition resources were produced to promote the GMH counselling services in both Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Financial Report Figures

	Apr 2008 - Mar 2009	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010
INCOME	£441,000	£445,000
Lothian NHS	47%	48%
Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS	41%	43%
Grants	10%	7%
Miscellaneous	2%	2%
EXPENDITURE	£418,000	£467,000
Staff Costs	61%	58%
Office Costs	15%	23%
Other staff/ Volunteer costs	6%	5%
Educational	16%	9%
Professional Fees	2%	2%
Depreciation	*	3%
Carried Over/ (deficit)	£23,000	(£22,000)

* less than 1%



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