



## News Release

### **PHE action plan tackles health inequalities for men who have sex with men (MSM)**

Public Health England (PHE) has today (4<sup>th</sup> February 2015) launched an action plan to address the health and wellbeing inequalities affecting gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM).

The plan focuses on three interrelated areas in which MSM are disproportionately burdened with ill-health: sexual health and HIV, mental health and in the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

Research shows that:

- MSM continue to be the group most affected by HIV infection.<sup>i</sup>
- MSM are twice as likely to be depressed or anxious compared with other men.<sup>ii</sup>
- Adult MSM are twice as likely to be dependent on alcohol compared with the rest of the male population and smoking rates are higher.<sup>iii</sup>
- MSM have higher rates of cardio vascular disease (CVD), asthma and diabetes<sup>iiii</sup>.
- MSM are less likely to seek help from health and social care services, and reveal their sexual identity to those providing their care<sup>iv</sup>.

Key determinants for improving inequalities include reducing the number of new HIV infections; closing the gap in self-reported mental ill health between MSM and the general male population; reducing the proportion of MSM who are drinking above lower risk levels and reporting use of harmful substances; and reducing smoking prevalence amongst MSM.

**Professor Kevin Fenton, Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England said:**

*“Despite vast improvements in social acceptance over the years, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people continue to face discrimination. As a result, this community faces barriers in accessing health services, and remain disproportionately burdened with ill-health.*

*“This structured programme of action will work with and support the public health system, private and third sector organisations to actively respond to the needs of these communities locally.”*

**Professor Jane Anderson, Expert Advisor on HIV, Sexual Health and Reproductive Health at Public Health England said:**

*“Men who have sex with men are amongst those most affected by HIV and other sexually transmitted infections in the UK, and numbers continue to rise. If we are to make a real impact on the HIV epidemic and improve sexual health it is crucial that we tackle the wider determinants of health set out in this framework”*

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### **Notes to Editors**

1. The action plan, titled ‘*Promoting the health and wellbeing of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men*’, is the first of its kind from a national body. It consolidates data from a PHE [report published in July 2014](#) that establishes the evidence base for the health inequalities affecting MSM. It sets out plans for the next 18 months to develop data, reduce inequalities in local areas and address the wider causes, working with and supporting local and national government, the NHS and relevant third sector organisations.
2. Key components of the action plan include:
  - A range of projects with the [National LGBT Partnership](#), including a new set of Healthy Living resources for trans people, based on evidence from the [LGB&T companion document to the Public Health Outcomes Framework](#).
  - New data publications on drug use in 2015 – to accompany continuing work with the public health system on sexually transmitted infections and HIV data among gay and bisexual men.
  - Improved data collection on sexual orientation monitoring in health care with NHS England, and with the Office of National Statistics to increase the granularity of data in the outcome indicators.
  - A set of projects funded by the MAC AIDS Foundation, to expand data to support black and minority gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (BME MSM). We are working with De Montford University to fully evaluate these to help build the evidence base in a UK context.
3. The action plan is being launched alongside a new programme of work which explores ‘[The health and wellbeing of black and minority ethnic gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men](#)’ (BME MSM). The project aims to reinvigorate action and increase understanding of BME MSM identity, health and social care needs among professionals and the public. Evidence shows that:
  - [Just 7% of black gay and bisexual men](#) have tested for any sexually transmitted infection compared to 26% of white gay and bisexual men.
  - A third of Asian men and mixed ethnicity men have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 compared to one in five of white gay and bisexual men.<sup>ii</sup>

4. This group also has significantly higher rates of [suicide, self-harm and mental illness](#)
5. The action plan is being launched at the *Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans People and Communities* conference, on Wednesday 4 February, 2015.
6. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe). Twitter: [@PHE\\_uk](https://twitter.com/PHE_uk), Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](https://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland)

#### **Useful info and statistics:**

- Gay, bisexual and other MSM constitute an estimated 2.6% of the male population in the United Kingdom (UK) – defined as men who have had at least one male sexual partner in the past five years.<sup>[v]</sup>
- In 2013, an estimated 43, 500 (40,200-48,200) MSM were living with HIV in the UK; this is equivalent to 59 per 1,000 MSM aged 15-59 years. HIV prevalence was higher in London where one in eight were living with HIV, compared to one in 26 outside London. In total, an estimated 7,200 (16%) MSM living with HIV were undiagnosed. HIV in the United Kingdom: 2014 Report<sup>iii</sup>
- Evidence shows that depression is associated with heavier use of drugs and alcohol and a small study found MSM reporting drug use to mask low self-esteem and/or self-confidence issues.<sup>[vi]</sup>
- At least 36% of older men report hiding their sexual identity through their lives<sup>[vii]</sup>
- 55% of young LGBT students say they have experienced homophobic bullying.<sup>[viii]</sup>

#### **For further information, case studies or interviews please contact:**

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<sup>i</sup>HIV in the United Kingdom: 2014 Report:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/377194/2014\\_PHE\\_HIV\\_annual\\_report\\_19\\_11\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377194/2014_PHE_HIV_annual_report_19_11_2014.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> McFall, SL. Understanding Society: Findings 2012. Colchester: Institute for Social and Economic Research [Internet]. University of Essex. 2012 [cited 2014 may 20]. Available from <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/research>

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- <sup>[ii]</sup> King M, Semlyen J, See Tai S, et al. A systematic review of mental disorders, suicide and deliberate self-harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people. *BMC Psychiatry*. 2008; 8 (70): 1-17.
- <sup>[iii]</sup> Lick, D. J., L. E. Durson, and K. L. Johnson. 2013. "Minority stress and physical health among sexual minorities." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8:521-548.
- <sup>[iv]</sup> [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/stonewall\\_gay\\_mens\\_health\\_final\\_1.pdf](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/stonewall_gay_mens_health_final_1.pdf)
- <sup>[v]</sup> Ethnicity. Stonewall health briefing - <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/documents/ethnicity.pdf>
- <sup>[vi]</sup> Mercer CH et al. Changes in sexual attitudes and lifestyles in Britain through the life course and over time: findings from the National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal). *The Lancet* - 30 November 2013 (Vol. 382, Issue 9907, Pages 1781-1794).
- <sup>[vii]</sup> HIV in the United Kingdom: 2014 Report:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/377194/2014\\_PHE\\_HIV\\_annual\\_report\\_19\\_11\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377194/2014_PHE_HIV_annual_report_19_11_2014.pdf)
- <sup>[viii]</sup> Regier DA, Farmer ME, Donald SR, Locke BZ, Keith SJ, Judd LL, et al. Comorbidity of mental disorders with alcohol and other drug abuse. Results from the epidemiologic catchment area (ECA study). *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. 1990; 264 (19):2511-2518.
- <sup>[ix]</sup> Heaphy, B. About Social Venues. Nottingham e-prints [Internet]. The University of Nottingham Information Services. 2014 [cited 2014 May 20].
- <sup>[x]</sup> Stonewall the lesbian, gay and bisexual charity. The School Report: The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools [Internet]. Stonewall; 2012 [cited 2014 May 16]. Available from:  
[http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at\\_school/education\\_resources/7957.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/at_school/education_resources/7957.asp)