

# Health and Social Services Committee

**HSS(2)-09-06(p6)**

**Meeting date: Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

**Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales**

**Title: LHB strategies for promoting sexual health messages to covert homosexual men engaged in sexual relations**

## **Purpose**

1. To provide an analysis of the work of Local Health Boards (LHBs) in promoting sexual health messages to covert gay men.

## **Summary/recommendations**

2. Helen Mary Jones during the committee meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> March (HSS(2)-04-06), asked the Minister to provide an analysis of how many LHB strategies address men who do not define themselves as culturally gay, but have sex with other men. The Minister agreed to provide a 'paper to note'.

## **Background**

### **Definitions**

3. The Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) state that covert homosexual men are defined by their 'needs' rather than openly gay and bisexual men who may be defined by 'identity'.

4. 'Covert gay men' include those that want to have gay sex but are:

- Fearful of coming out due to stigma of homosexuality in their communities, and amongst their friends and families
- Married or in heterosexual relationships

### **Policy context**

5. The Strategic framework for promoting sexual health in Wales and the post consultation action plan were published in 2000, and included the aims to:

- Improve the sexual health of Wales; and
- Narrow sexual health inequalities

6. The action plan lays out a series of objectives to deliver the strategic aims, including the aim to ‘reduce incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in Wales’ by establishing a national campaign to target teenagers and young adults in general about STI risks; and to specifically campaign on HIV and other STI awareness, targeting men who have sex with men and particularly those who do not identify with a gay lifestyle, with delivery at a local level by providing support for in-depth motivational work.

7. The Assembly Government’s Public Health Improvement Division (PHID) (at the time – Health Promotion Division) are responsible for delivering this at a national level and LHBs (at the time – Health Authorities and Local Health Alliances) for delivery at a local level.

### **Action at a national level**

8. The Assembly Government’s PHID have managed a contract with the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) since 2002 to provide sexual health campaigns to gay men. This includes a series of campaigns on a range of STIs (including HIV), as well as in-depth motivational work used to back up the campaign work. This is in the form of regional workshops providing information and counselling to people who have contacted THT in response to the campaign.

### **Action at a local level**

9. LHBs are responsible for needs assessment at a local level. THT have four contracts in place in South Wales, covering 13 LHBs (see annex 1):

- Carmarthenshire who fund work throughout the county
- Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil – all fund separately
- Newport, which funds on behalf of Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouth
- Swansea which funds on behalf of Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot

10. These contracts with THT are to carry out ‘outreach work’ with gay men, which is designed to complement national action and includes meeting men in ‘public sex environments’ to discuss their needs. These are places more likely to be frequented by covert gay men as they are not open to a wider audience – only other men who are there for sex.

11. THT also provide:

- A telephone helpline - which can put men in touch with a THT ‘married men’s group’ in Bristol for further advice and support if required
- Limited sexual health promotion counselling in a face to face setting and via email

- Work with police liaison committees adding to both the police forces’ and THT’s ability to work sensitively with gay men
- Operation of the UK wide Netreach service and the gay dating site ‘gaydar’

12. In addition, Powys addresses this issue through their ongoing sexual health promotion work delivered through the Local Public Health Team, which seeks to provide a service for this group.

13. The remaining 7 LHBs do not address the issue (including a ‘no response’ from Gwynedd) – see annex 1.

### Consideration

14. Paper to note.

### Financial implications

15. The Health and Social Services Resources Directorate have seen and noted that there are no financial implications arising directly from this paper (2529).

### Cross cutting themes

16. This paper does not have any implications for equal opportunities or sustainable development.

### Action for subject committee

17. Paper to note.

Brian Gibbons

Minister for Health and Social Services

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### Annex 1 – LHBs in Wales that specifically address the issue of men who do not define themselves as culturally gay but engage in sexual activity of that nature

Local Health Board	Does the LHB address the issue? (Yes/No)	Does the LHB have contract with THT to address the issue?	* LHB area covered by THT contract for former Health Authority region
Anglesey	No		

Blaenau Gwent	Yes	No	Yes
Bridgend	Yes	No	Yes
Caerphilly	Yes	No	Yes
Cardiff	Yes	Yes	
Carmarthenshire	Yes	Yes	
Ceredigion	No		
Conwy	No		
Denbighshire	No		
Flintshire	No		
Gwynedd	Awaiting response		
Merthyr Tydfil	Yes	Yes	
Monmouthshire	Yes	No	Yes
Neath Port Talbot	Yes	No	Yes
Newport	Yes	Yes	
Pembrokeshire	No		
Powys	Yes	No	No
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Yes	Yes	
Swansea	Yes	Yes	
Torfaen	Yes	No	Yes
Vale of Glamorgan	Yes	Yes	
Wrexham	No		