

SEXUAL HEALTH NEWS

WELCOME TO ISSUE 9, AUTUMN 2019



HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) partner with LGBT Ireland launch a new LGBT+ eLearning resource on HSELand (for more see page 5).

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Every effort has been made by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to ensure the information in this publication is accurate. The information contained in this newsletter should in no way be a substitute for seeking expert advice from an appropriate health professional or agency.

The information that is written by the different contributors in this issue of Sexual Health News (SHN), is the view of the individual contributor/author and not that of the HSE.

Some photos may be posed by models for illustration purposes only.

Welcome

by Martin Grogan,
HSE Health Promotion & Improvement,
Cork & Kerry

and Tracey Tobin HSE Health Promotion Officer
HSE South East, Co-editors of Sexual Health News

As always we are delighted to bring you issue 9 of Sexual Health News (SHN).



This issue is presented with a strong focus on matters relating to LGBTI+ communities and how important it is for all of us working within the health services to be cognisant of the particular health needs of these groups.

Sexual Health News (SHN) is distributed in the following ways:

- via our own URL link, by clicking or uploading this link. This URL link will allow you to access all previous editions, under the section Read More https://issuu.com/murphyprintdesign/docs/hse_sexualhealth57105r?e=30062790/60050452
- SHN is also available at - <https://twitter.com/HSELive>
- and on the Irish Health Repository, LENUS <https://www.lenus.ie/discover>

I would like to take this opportunity to say I will be moving away from my role as one of the editors of SHN; it has been a great pleasure to work on this newsletter both as a fledgling regional newsletter way back in 2009 to its current role as the national sexual health newsletter.

A huge thank you to my colleagues Tracey and Anita for their support and commitment to this resource; but mostly my thanks go to you, the readers and contributors.

As always, **please** keep contributing to SHN; Issue 10 due is out in the spring of 2020, it's a great way to share our work and to keep informed in what's happening within sexual health promotion in Ireland and further afield.

Closing date for receipt of submissions 31st January 2020.

Martin

Call for Submissions

If you have any feedback on the newsletter or would like to contribute to Issue 10, please contact Tracey Tobin at tracy.tobin@hse.ie

Editorial Team

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SHN is funded by the HSE Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme



Anita Ghafoor-Butt

Updates from the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

by Owen Brennan, Research Assistant



Decrease in births among teenagers

There was a further reduction in the number of teenagers who gave birth in 2018, according to figures released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in May 2019. The figures show that 980 teenagers aged between 15-19 years gave birth in 2018, compared to 1,041 in 2017. This equates to a rate of 6.3 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years old in 2018, a decrease from 6.9 in 2017. Since 2001, the number of births to teenagers in Ireland has declined by 68%.

For more information see here: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/about/media/press-releases/2019-teen-births-press-statement.pdf>

Number of Irish-resident women travelling to the UK for abortions decreases

Figures issued by the UK Department of Health in June 2018 show that the number of Irish-resident women travelling to the UK for abortion decreased slightly. The number decreased from 3,019 in 2017 to 2,879 women in 2018. This equates to a rate of 2.9 per 1000 in 2018, representing a 57% decline since 2001. Data provided to the SHCPP by an online provider of the abortion pill, reports that the number of women from the island of Ireland who were supported by their service to obtain medical abortion in 2018 was 1,405. This figure increased by 188 since 2017.

For more information, see here: <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/about/media/press-releases/2018-decrease-abortion-stats.pdf>

National Condom Distribution Service Report 2018

The National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS) was established in late 2015 to assist in meeting the aims of the National Sexual Health Strategy 2015-2020. It functions as a central point for organisations working with groups who are at disproportionate risk of experiencing negative sexual health outcomes such as HIV, STIs or unplanned pregnancy to access free condoms and lubricant sachets.

The SHCPP published a 2018 report on the activities for the NCDS in July 2019. In 2018, 409,319 condoms and 287,565 lubricant sachets were ordered by 67 organisations. The report provides information on the services that ordered from the NCDS including the groups they work with, the quantities of condoms and lubricant sachets ordered by each, and how they distributed the condoms and lubricant sachets.

For more information, see here <https://www.sexualwellbeing.ie/for-professionals/research/research-reports/ncds-2018-final.pdf>

For more information on the work of the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme and to access the National Sexual Health Strategy, please log onto www.sexualwellbeing.ie

HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) partner with LGBT Ireland launch a new LGBT+ eLearning resource on HSELand

by Moira Germaine, Education Manager SHCPP

In August, the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) launched a new LGBT+ eLearning course on HSELand.



'LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion Training: the basics', was developed by LGBT Ireland and the SHCPP, in consultation with a working group comprised of relevant NGOs. It was designed to help all staff within the HSE develop an understanding of how they might make simple changes to their everyday practice to provide an enhanced service to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, HSE, has welcomed the training, "The new module was developed in response to a demand from staff for additional support in relation to LGBT+ inclusive practice. It builds on previous HSE work in this area and is an ideal way for staff to gain a basic understanding of LGBT+ issues and how taking an inclusive approach will yield better health and wellbeing outcomes for our LGBT+ service users. I encourage all HSE staff to complete this accessible and informative training programme".

Helen Deely, Acting Assistant National Director for Health and Wellbeing, agreed adding, "The programme uses practical, real-life examples to illustrate how attitudes and behaviours can have a profound impact on people's experience of healthcare, and it emphasises the importance of effective, inclusive communication with LGBT+ service users".



With the advancement of LGBT+ - friendly legislation over the last few years, and all the excitement of the recent Pride activities throughout Ireland, there are those who might question the need for such a training programme in 2019. However, although there have been many positive developments in various aspects of private and public life, the continuation of conscious and unconscious exclusionary practices impacts on the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ people and their families. This is borne out by research in respect of the LGBTI community's experience of inequality and discrimination; the LGBTI Ireland report (2016)¹ points to stark challenges, in line with global studies.

Forty eight per cent of LGBTI respondents reported bullying as a result of their sexual minority status, while 67.3% reported witnessing bullying towards other LGBTI people, suggesting poor social inclusion of those identifying as LGBTI. Irish LGBTI people were also twice as likely to self-harm as their heterosexual peers, three times as likely to attempt suicide and four times as likely to experience levels of severe/extremely severe stress, anxiety, and depression. LGBTI participants also reported increased rates of suicide ideation and increased substance abuse issues.

Paula Fagan, CEO of LGBT Ireland commented, "These difficulties are not experienced as an integral part of being LGBT rather it is due to the stress and stigma which people still experience due to having a minority sexual orientation or gender. This can be as a result of directly experiencing discrimination or negative attitudes from other people but also it is quite often internalised stigma which some LGBT+ people feel due to the discriminatory societal messages surrounding them from early years."

On the positive side, Paula has seen a steadily increasing demand for LGBT+ equality and diversity training programmes from employers and statutory agencies across Ireland and a willingness of staff to expand their understanding of LGBT+ issues and their ability to engage respectfully, "We find that most people are willing and eager to improve their approach to LGBT+ service users but may be blocked by a lack of understanding, or by a fear of not doing or saying the right thing."

NEW UPDATES

It was this appetite for support that encouraged LGBT Ireland to work with the SHCPP to develop, **'LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion Training: the basics'**. The module does not address clinical matters but rather the everyday interactions that support or disrupt the creation of a trusting relationship between HSE staff and service users. Paula points to the transformative power of simple, inclusive actions in creating an atmosphere of positive regard for LGBT+ people. "You can't imagine the impact on an elderly Gay man or Lesbian woman of seeing images of same sex couples included in the posters and booklets in waiting rooms, when many of them have experience invisibility for so long; nor of the affirmation a transgender person might feel when a staff member calls them by their chosen name without comment or fuss."

Moira Germaine, Education Manager and her colleague, Anita Ghafoor- Butt, Communications Manager both with the SHCPP, worked in partnership with Paula Fagan and Helen Mortimer from LGBT Ireland on this project. Moira feels that the HSE and its partner organisation, Tusla, are almost uniquely placed to champion and progress LGBT+ inclusive practice, "With our large workforces and broad remit in relation to clinical and social care, we reach into the lives of people at all ages and stages of development, supporting them in their times of most need. Because of this, we are extremely well placed to make a positive difference to how LGBT+ people feel seen and respected and it is this responsibility and opportunity that has already prompted large numbers of staff to seek support in developing LGBT+ - friendly practice. We hope that the online module will go some way to meeting this need"

To access 'LGBT+ Awareness and Inclusion Training: the basics', search for the title in 'My Learning' on the HSEland dashboard <https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>

The training is available to HSE, Tusla and all partner organisations which have access to HSEland.



L to R Main Photo (HSE land project team, HSE LGBT allies, CEO HSE, HSE HR) Maeve O'Brien (Acting Programme Lead, SHCPP), Helen Deely (Acting AND Health & Wellbeing, Strategic Planning and Transformation), Ray Leonard (LGBT+ Allies Representative), Moira Germaine (Education Manager SHCPP), Paul Reid (HSE CEO), Lorraine Smyth (HR Communications & Innovations Lead), Paula Fagan (CEO LGBT Ireland), Helen Mortimer (LGBT Ireland, E-learning Development Officer), Tony Liston (General Manager, Leadership, Education and Talent Development - HSEland), Anita Ghafoor-Butt (Communications Manager, Health & Wellbeing: SHCPP).

Reference

- ¹ The LGBTIreland Report (2016) is a ground-breaking study of the mental health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Ireland. It is the result of a very productive partnership between GLEN, BeLonG To, the National Office for Suicide Prevention and Trinity College Dublin. See <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/lgbt-ireland-report.html>

Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick sign up to HIV Fast-track cities initiative

by Caroline Hurley, Project Manager SHCPP

On 13th June 2019, Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick signed the Paris Declaration, committing to fast-track city-level responses to HIV, as part of a global partnership to end the HIV epidemic. The event, organised by the HSE Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP), was attended by An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister for Health Simon Harris, Minister for Health Promotion Catherine Byrne, Dr José Zuniga President of IAPAC, many of the newly appointed Mayors of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway, representatives from the city authorities and HIV NGO stakeholders.



Ending HIV as a public health threat by 2030 is feasible if high HIV burden cities around the world fast-track their HIV responses.

In all regions of the world, cities and urban areas bear a large share of the global HIV burden. Cities are home to large numbers of people belonging to key populations at higher risk of HIV infection. Ending the epidemic requires ensuring that resources, services and support for preventing and treating HIV reach the populations and places most in need. Cities offer unique opportunities for doing this.

The HIV Fast-Track Cities Initiative is a global partnership between almost 300 cities and municipalities, the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the City of Paris. The Initiative was launched on World AIDS Day in Paris in 2014.



Front centre: Minister Simon Harris TD; Caroline Hurley (SHCPP); Maeve O'Brien (SHCPP); an Taoiseach Leo Varadkar; Dr José Zuniga (IAPAC); Minister Catherine Byrne TD. Grouped from left to right: Limerick: Cllr. Frankie Daly and Anne Rizzo (Limerick City and County Council); Ann Mason and Cillian Flynn (GOSHH) Cork: Cllr. John Sheehan, Lord Mayor of Cork; Ann Doherty, Cork City Council; Martin Davoren and Catherine Kennedy, Sexual Health Centre Cork Dublin: Lord Mayor of Dublin Paul McAuliffe; Cllr. Eoghan O'Brien, Mayor of Fingal; AnnMarie Farrelly, Fingal County Council; Cllr. Vicki Casserly, Mayor of South Dublin County Council; Brian Hora, South Dublin County Council; Niall Mulligan, Bernard Condon and Jeanne McDonagh, HIV Ireland Galway: Mr Thomas Connell, Galway City Council; Joe McDonagh, AIDS West.

Continued on page 8

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The initiative's aim is to build upon, strengthen, and leverage existing HIV programmes and resources to attain the following targets by 2020:

- 90% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) know their HIV status
- 90% of people who know their HIV-positive status are on HIV treatment
- 90% of PLHIV on HIV treatment have suppressed viral loads
- Zero stigma and discrimination

In line with Health Ireland and the Healthy Cities and Counties programme, a multi-city approach was agreed for the 4 cities Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. The Paris Declaration was signed for each participating city by the Mayors and community HIV partner organisations: HIV Ireland for Dublin, Sexual Health Centre in Cork, AIDSWest for Galway and GOSHH for Limerick. On the day of the signing event, an Taoiseach and Ministers for Health announced the provision of €450,000 funding to kick-start the initiative in Ireland. HSE SHCPP will work together with HIV partner organisations to raise awareness about HIV, expand community HIV testing and address HIV associated stigma across the 4 cities. The HIV Fast-Track cities initiative promotes partnership between city authorities and HIV stakeholders, including clinical services, public health and NGO's. For each city, a HIV fast-track cities steering group will be established, comprising HSE, city and HIV stakeholders, who will work together to progress the aims and targets of the initiative.



Male Advice Line – Men's Development Network

by Rebecca Morris, Coordinator Male Advice

On the 20th May 2019, Waterford City based Men's Development Network launched the National Male Advice Line. The Male Advice Line offers advice and guidance to male victims of domestic abuse. The Male Advice Line is funded by

Tusla's Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence section. Professional and experienced counsellors operate the phone lines for 36 hours throughout the week, from Monday to Friday. The counsellors offer support and advice to male victims of domestic abuse, both those who are currently experiencing domestic abuse, and those who previously experienced domestic abuse.

The finding from a recent survey carried out by the National Crime Council indicated that 88,000 men in Ireland have been abused by their partner at some point during their lives. It can also be noted that only 5% (1 in 20) of males report the abuse to the Gardaí, therefore, leaving many male victims of domestic abuse suffering the abuse alone. The Men's Development Network believe that men often do not report themselves as victims of domestic abuse due to Irish males being stereotyped as being both physically and emotionally strong. Domestic abuse can affect individuals in Ireland, regardless of gender, age, race or socio-economic class. Some of the common indicators and warning signs of domestic abuse include; criticism, possessiveness, jealousy, shaming and name calling, preventing access to children, making or threatening false allegations to friends and Gardaí, controls finances, forces sexual acts, hitting, punching and restraining.

The Male Advice Line is a safe, non-judgemental and confidential support service that gives male victims of domestic abuse the opportunity to seek emotional support and time to discuss and talk through their experiences of domestic abuse. In response to this, the experienced counsellors can provide the caller with relevant information and practical advice. The counsellor can also signpost the caller to other relevant organisations as required, including housing, legal advice and mental health supports.



Male Advice Line

Advice & Support for Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

The Male Advice Line can also offer support, advice and guidance to family members and friends who are concerned that their loved one is being abused.

The Male Advice Line from Monday to Friday each week; the phone lines are open and staffed by the counsellors during the following times:

- **Monday: 10am-6pm**
- **Tuesday: 12pm-8pm**
- **Wednesday: 10am – 6pm**
- **Thursday: 12pm-8pm**
- **Friday: 2pm-6pm**

The Freephone number:

1800 816 588

Cork Sexual Health Centre Updates

by Ms Catherine Kennedy, Centre Manager

New LGBTI+ Sexual Health Advisor at the Sexual Health Centre, Cork City;

The Sexual Health Centre (SHC) is delighted to announce the new role of LGBTI+ Sexual Health Advisor supporting individuals across Cork City. The SHC recognise that furnishing people with the skills to navigate their sexual health, sexuality and identity is crucial to accessing healthy relationships as well as overall wellbeing. The purpose of this role is to support the sexual health of individuals in relation to their sexuality and identity. Research highlights the lack of focus in supporting romantic relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people “despite evidence of relationship-oriented risks, including STI/HIV infection, unplanned pregnancy, and interpersonal violence” (Greene et al, 2014). Isolation, anxiety, disconnect and uncertainty remain interconnected with growing up in Ireland as an LGBTI+ person. Thus, LGBTI+ individuals lack education, insight and supports for good healthy relationships, sexual health practices and protections. The LGBTI+ Sexual Health Advisor will be responsible for supporting individuals and groups in relation to navigating their sexual health, sexuality and wellbeing.



For free one-to-one advice and support or to refer to this service please contact Jack on 021 427 6676 to arrange an appointment.

Return of out-of-hours, GP-led asymptomatic STI clinic at the Sexual Health Centre, Cork City.

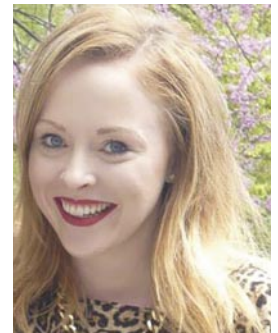


The Sexual Health Centre (SHC) is delighted to announce the return of its out-of-hours, GP-led asymptomatic STI clinic. The clinic is hosted in 16 Peters Street, Cork on Wednesday evenings from 5pm-8pm. Consultations cost €70 and include a full STI screen as well as a consultation with a GP and Sexual Health Advisor.

To make an appointment for the out-of-hours service please telephone Niamh on 021-4276676

Dublin Well Woman Centre-Early Medical Abortion Services

by Caroline Winston, Administration & Communications Officer, Dublin Well Woman Centre



At the Dublin Well Woman Centre, we have been supporting women in crisis pregnancies for over 40 years, and with repeal of the 8th Amendment and the introduction of abortion services under Irish law, it is our aim to ensure women experience the best medical care during this procedure. As part of a suite of women's reproductive health services offered by the Dublin Well Woman Centre, our clinics have been providing Early Medical Abortion (EMA) consultations since January 2019.

An EMA is free for all women living in the Republic of Ireland. For pregnancies under 9 weeks, an EMA can be obtained at a Dublin Well Woman Centre clinic or in a number of GP practices across the country. For pregnancies between 9 and 12 weeks, the initial appointment can still be made at one of our clinics, and we will make a referral to a hospital for the procedure. Those who choose to have an EMA will come for 3 visits in total (the last visit being optional).

There have been some challenges, however. We are finding that some women are unaware that the pregnancy is dated from the start of the last menstrual period, meaning that they can often be further along in their pregnancy than they realised. This can cause disruption and stress to people who are already extremely distressed. In these circumstances, getting an immediate appointment is crucial, but can be challenging for the clinics.

Another vital part of our services at Dublin Well Woman Centre is our counselling service. We provide crisis pregnancy, post termination and foetal abnormality counselling at our clinics. This is a client centred, non-directive service where all options can be discussed, and it is delivered by fully qualified, accredited professional counsellors. We also provide an information pack and skills for self-care and preparation.

For further information on Dublin Well Woman Centre and the services provided by them contact Caroline Winston - cwinston@dublinwellwoman.com or telephone (01) 874 9243



LGBT CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME raises the visibility and inclusion of older LGBT+ people in health and care services

by Collette O'Regan Training and Information Coordinator LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland created its **LGBT Champions Programme** in 2018 and targets health and social care professionals caring for older people who grew up at a time in Ireland when homosexuality was still pathologized (until 1990), still criminalized (until 1993) and where to come out involved experiencing significant losses of important family, friendship and community relationships and ties. *Visible Lives*¹ (2011) is to date the only Irish research on older LGBT+ citizens of Ireland. As a snapshot of the lives of 144 LGBT+ people aged between 55-80 years it is a wake-up call for anyone working and caring for older people:

- 7% have not told anyone they are LGBT
- 10% not out to any of their close family
- 28% not out to neighbours
- 35% still fear rejection from friends if they come out
- 27% fear harassment if people find out they are LGBT
- 2% reported having religion compared with 50% of the general population of the same age
- 32%-had a mental health problem at some point in their lives
- 5% have self-harmed in the past year
- only 2% are using mental health services
- 40% not out to their healthcare services

Stonewall UK research² from the same year, corroborates the higher levels of isolation experienced by aging LGB people and can be further seen in other international research. In summary older LGBT+ people have **diminished support networks in comparison to heterosexual peers**- Irish (UK comparative % in brackets):

- More likely to be single: 43% (40%) of gay and bisexual men are single, compared to 15% (15%) for heterosexual men
- More likely to live alone: 46% (41%) of LGB people live alone compared to 29% (28%) of heterosexual people

- Less likely to have children: just over 25% of gay and bisexual men and 50% of lesbian and bisexual women have children, compared to almost 90% of heterosexual men and women
- Less likely to see biological family members regularly: <25% of LGB people see biological family at least once a week compared to >50% of heterosexual people.

The research also revealed **notable differences in health risk factors and lifestyle choices**:

- Drink alcohol more often: 47% (45%) drink alcohol at least 3-4 days a week compared to 25% (31%) of heterosexual people
- More likely to take drugs: 4.5% (9%) have taken drugs in last 12 months compared to <0.5% (2%) of heterosexual people
- More likely to have a history of mental ill health:
 - 40% of lesbian and bisexual women have been diagnosed with depression and 33% with anxiety
 - Gay and bisexual men twice as likely to have been diagnosed with depression/ anxiety compared to heterosexual peers
 - >12% have seriously thought about or attempted suicide in last 12 months.

As is obvious from these findings, older LGBT+ people are more dependent on health and social care services as they age, yet do not access services for as long as possible, further negatively impacting their physical and mental health and their chances for positive outcomes post-intervention. **Older LGBT+ people have called for health services to “come out as LGBT+ friendly”** and LGBT Ireland has created the **LGBT Champions Programme to enable staff to know how to do this** in their practice. The programme offers a combined model of older LGBT+ Awareness Training, access to follow-up support / mentoring and access to the Champions Network with its on-going learning resources, as the pathway to LGBT+ inclusive care in Ireland's healthcare service.



LGBT CHAMPIONS

Inclusion, Visibility & Equality in Older People's Care

References

¹ *Visible Lives* (2011) GLEN/HSE

² *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in Later Life* (2011) Stonewall UK

For more information check:

www.lgbt.ie/ChampionsProgramme

Coming Out Guides for LGBTI+ Youth and Their Parents

by Sinead Keane, Communications Manager, BeLong To

Whether someone in your family has come out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTI+), you are figuring out if you are LGBTI+, or you are supporting an LGBTI+ young person as a professional, BeLong To Youth Services is here to help.

The national LGBTI+ youth organisation has created two new resources - a Coming Out Guide for Young People and a Coming Out Guide for Parents. These resources are available free of charge for young people, families, schools, youth services, and anyone who is working with LGBTI+ young people.

According to the 2016 LGBTIreland Report, most people discover their LGBTI+ identity at the age of 12, yet 16 is the most common age they come out to people. This four-year period of concealing their LGBTI+ identity occurs at a critical time of physical, social and emotional development. Knowing that they will be supported and accepted by their family and friends helps LGBTI+ young people to come out.

BeLong To's resources offers tips, advice and support for young people who may not know what feels right for them in terms of their sexual or gender identity, and for parents who are trying to deal with it as best as they can.

Order your free copy today: <http://www.belongto.org/coming-out-resources/>



HSE Development of Sexuality in Children

"Find out how to teach your child about sexuality in a way that will help them to have a healthy attitude towards sex, love and their body" please click on the link here to view the material first hand.

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/development-of-sexuality-in-children.html#onThisPage>

www.mychild.ie contains information and advice on pregnancy and the first 3 years of your child's life.

<https://www2.hse.ie/my-child/>

Expression of Sexuality in Older Age

There is a new on-line link which might be of interest to you – it's an online training programme hosted by Social Care Ireland on supporting the positive expression of sexuality in older age. To learn more about this on-line training please click on the link below

<https://socialcareireland.ie/intimage-project-sexuality-older-people-online-modules/>



This section of the newsletter provides an update of new material that the reader may find helpful in their respective roles. If there are any new resources, factsheets, infographics or booklets you are aware of please let the Sexual Health News team know and we can include details of these in future editions.

Workshop on 'The Public Health Management of an STI outbreak' for personnel working in Public Health Departments, held in the HPSC, Nov 2018

Report prepared by Dr Laura Heavey¹, Dr Aine McNamara¹, Dr Fionnuala Cooney² and Dr Mark O'Loughlin¹

(¹ Department of Public Health Medicine, HSE West & ² Department of Public Health Medicine, HSE East)

A successful and productive workshop for personnel working in Public Health Departments was held on November 22nd 2018 at the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in Dublin. The goal was to ensure that those working in public health departments around the country were equipped with the skills necessary to manage an outbreak of an STI in their area. It was also a great opportunity for personnel to discuss challenges, to learn from each other and to identify areas where they need further training. The guidance for the public health management of STI outbreaks, which public health professionals developed and published in 2016¹, was a key resource used throughout the workshop.

An overview of the guidance document on STI outbreaks, experience of working with personnel in the non-health care sectors (including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)) during STI outbreaks and the important role of infectious disease surveillance² in helping to identify STI outbreaks at an early stage were presented during the day.

After the presentations, participants were organised into small working groups and asked to devise a management plan for various outbreak scenarios. For these scenarios, different STIs were chosen to reflect a variety of public health management issues and the complexities of engaging with different target populations. Arising from the recent case of cephalosporin-resistant gonorrhoea in Ireland in August 2018³, the organisers included a scenario on this topic (see below scenario 3). The scenarios were as follows:

Scenario 1: Outbreak of lymphogranuloma venereum among men who have sex with men

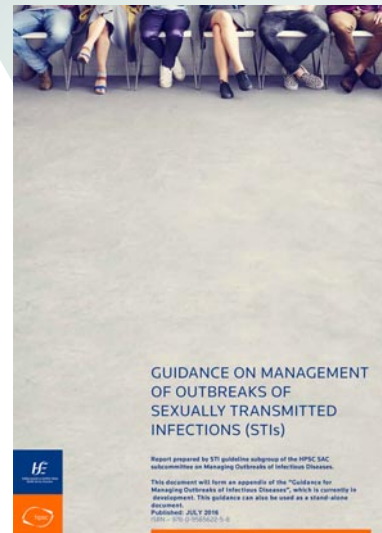
Scenario 2: Outbreak of gonorrhoea among college students

Scenario 3: One case of antibiotic resistant gonorrhoea

Scenario 4: Outbreak of syphilis among older men in a rural area

In the afternoon, all participants reconvened for a facilitated discussion on the public health challenges and issues identified in the group work on each scenario. Lessons identified included the following; the importance of working closely with local STI clinics, NGOs and student health services was a major theme of the discussions. The role of regional sexual health forums was highlighted as a means to help to identify, and bring together, all local stakeholders in sexual health. In addition, these forums can foster information sharing and aid the development of partnerships that can be extremely useful when responding to an outbreak situation. As well as partnerships with NGOs, the importance of high quality partner notification processes at all STI clinics was recognised and discussed. Adequate support and investment in this area is vital. The development of a mechanism to assess the reach and effectiveness of partner notification practices in Ireland was also debated.

Feedback from participants at the end of the day was positive. It is hoped to expand attendance at future workshops by inviting a wider range of stakeholders, outside of Public Health, that are working in sexual health. This could further improve collaboration among all of us who are working towards improving the population's sexual health and wellbeing.



References

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² HSPC. Notifiable Diseases. Available from: <http://www.hpsc.ie/notifiablediseases/>

³ HPSC. Epi-Insight: Disease Surveillance Report of HPSC, Ireland. Dublin: HPSC, 2018./

LGBTI+ Young People Need More Than Token Gestures - Strategic Plan 2019-2021

by Sinead Keane,
Communications Manager,
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Flying a rainbow flag is a great first step, but real inclusion needs a whole community approach says BeLoNG To Youth Services, launching their three-year plan for the future of LGBTI+ young people in Ireland 'Sharing the Learning'. The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan highlights the need for schools, services, and organisations to deliver LGBTI+ inclusive services in a way that has real impact on the lives of LGBTI+ young people. The national organisation for LGBTI+ young people in Ireland will lead the way offering training, tools, and resources to equip schools, organisations, and services to understand and meet the needs of LGBTI+ young people.

This involves changing attitudes and behaviour through developing and implementing effective organisational policies and plans, implementing programmes that supports diversity and respect, and ensuring that staff are equipped to address LGBTI+ issues. Professionals need to be equipped with the tools to respond appropriately when an LGBTI+ young person 'comes out', to signpost LGBTI+ young people as appropriate to outside agencies and supports, and to work with the community outside the service. This includes the local schools, parents and community organisations to promote a wider LGBTI+ inclusive community.



From L-R (back row): Daniel Whooley; Jay Pope; Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon; CEO BeLoNG To Youth Services, Moninne Griffith; Chairperson, BeLoNG To Youth Services, Directors, Nikki Gallagher; and, (front) Matt Kennedy.

LGBTI+ young people in Ireland experience specific barriers when accessing services including education and healthcare according to the 2016 *LGBTIreland Report*. These include a lack of acknowledgment or understanding of LGBTI identities and specific experiences and the appropriate language and terminology to use. According to the report, LGBTI+ young people experience two times the level of self-harm, three times the level of attempted suicide, and four times the level of anxiety and depression compared to their non-LGBTI+ friends as a result of fear of isolation, fear of rejection and bullying.

Speaking at the launch of the event, Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon commented:

"It is vital that we not only move away from the secrecy associated with being LGBTI+, but we must provide appropriate and adequate support for the children involved. I have been consistently in awe of the ability of children and young people to come out of even the darkest holes psychologically – once they have the right support from the people they trust and who can offer a non-judgemental listening ear. If we want our children to fulfill their potential, we need to create the best possible environment and give them every opportunity."

Moninne Griffith, CEO of BeLonG To Youth Services said:

"Flying a rainbow flag and celebrating Pride are good first steps, but real inclusion is more than this – it is a whole community approach to ensure LGBTI+ young people are visible, valued, and fully included. Being LGBTI+ does not mean you should experience unequal treatment when you go to school, access services, or start work. Yet LGBTI+ young people can experience discrimination from a lack of understanding to outright hostility in their day to day lives from using the bathroom to visiting a healthcare provider. Over the next three years, our work will focus on enabling Ireland to support, understand, and celebrate LGBTI+ young people to live up to their full potential—free from exclusion, judgment, and discrimination. We will share our expertise offering training and resources so that Ireland that is a positive and welcoming space to grow up LGBTI+."

BeLonG To Youth Services is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland. Since 2003, BeLonG To has worked with LGBTI+ young people to create a world where they are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences. The organisation advocates and campaigns on behalf of young LGBTI+ people, and offers a specialised LGBTI+ youth service with a focus on mental and sexual health, alongside drug and alcohol outreach.

Living in Kerry: an LGBT+ perspective

by Caroline Doyle, Community Worker, HSE Kerry

Did you know that there are six Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Support Groups operating in Kerry, and that three of these groups support the Transgender community? There has been a lot of community activism in Kerry and especially in the past few years with Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KDYS) supporting Youth LGBT groups; and Listowel Family Resource Centre (FRC), Kerry Adolescent Counselling Centre in partnership with the HSE supporting new initiatives such as TransKerry to emerge.

It is timely then that new research will be published in October 2019. The research has been commissioned by Listowel FRC and funded through HSE Social Inclusion and is titled "Living in Kerry: an LGBT+ perspective". The researcher met with focus groups (under 18's and adults) and conducted online surveys with 109 people living in or originally from Kerry.

Some of the key findings include:

- While most adults reported positive experiences of living in Kerry, it was noted by most that living in a rural area presents more challenges for LGBT+ perspective
- There is a lack of visibility of LGBT+ in Kerry generally and most particularly in the workplace
- Early experiences of being LGBT+ are difficult for young people and they reported being subject to unwanted commentary and in some cases bullying
- Transgender people have a particular set of challenges to face, both internally and from society.

Primary recommendations arising from this research are:

- For a Kerry LGBT Solidarity campaign
- A role model network to be created
- A virtual LGBT+ resource centre to be established.

As one person stated *"If you are in the closet, gay Kerry seems invisible!"*

The research will be launched on Wednesday October 16th @6pm in Listowel FRC.
For further information about the research or the launch event please contact Caroline Doyle caroline.doyle@hse.ie



Developing LGBT cultural competence in health and social care education

by Agnes Higgins PhD, Professor in Mental Health, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

As the population of Europe is ageing, more and more older people are in need of care and support. This will include older LGBT people, yet research continues to demonstrate that older LGBT people experience social exclusion while interacting with health and social care providers and that their life stories and relationships are overlooked and undervalued.

In some cases, they experience direct discrimination within healthcare environments. There is also evidence that many educators lack the knowledge and skills to develop curricula that addresses, in an inclusive and affirmative manner, the health and social care needs of older LGBT people.

The BEING ME project group, which includes partners from Trinity College Dublin (Professor Agnes Higgins and Professor Brian Keogh), Outhouse LGBT Community Resource Centre (Ireland), Middlesex University London (United Kingdom), Stichting Consortium Beroepsonderwijs (Netherlands), Stichting Nationaal Ouderenfonds (Netherlands), and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) is an Erasmus + funded project.

The project aims to support the social inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) older people who use health and social care services. The project group have recently published best practice principles on developing LGBT cultural competence in health and social care education. The principles present some steps that educators can take to ensure that their teaching practice is reflective of the needs of older LGBT people.

The best practice principles are informed by the LGBT literature feedback from the LGBT community during two world café events that were held in the Netherlands and Ireland and the experiences of the people involved in the BEING ME project. The principles are available for download [here](#).

For more information on the project, visit the being me website www.beingme.eu



The BEING ME project group, Professor Agnes Higgins and Professor Brian Keogh (Trinity College Dublin), Mr George Robotham (Outhouse LGBT Community Resource Centre, Dublin) and other partners from Middlesex University London (United Kingdom), Stichting Consortium Beroepsonderwijs (Netherlands), Stichting Nationaal Ouderenfonds (Netherlands), and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia).

Recent Graduates of the National Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP)



Portlaoise



Ardee



Kilkenny

Foundation Programmes in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP) locations for courses in early 2020

The South East

For further information contact:

Tracey Tobin **Tel:** 052 6177037

Mobile: 087 9028590

Email: tracy.tobin@hse.ie

Tallaght

For further information contact:

Emer O'Leary **Tel:** 086 1207030

Email: Emer.oleary@hse.ie

North Dublin

For further information contact:

Rachel Burke

Tel: 01 8976180

Email: Rachel.burke8@hse.ie

Limerick

For further information contact:

Mairead Kelly **Tel:** 061 483257

Mobile: 086 4130162

Email: maireada.kelly@hse.ie

Donegal

For further information contact:

Lisa O'Hagan

Tel General Office: 074 9104693

Tel Direct line: 074 9109114

Email: lisa.ohagan@hse.ie

Midlands

For further information contact:

Margaret Whittaker

Tel: 057 9357800/057 9357804

Mobile: 086 3801165

Email: margaret.whittaker@hse.ie

Killarney, Co. Kerry

For further information contact:

Máire O'Leary **Tel:** 064 6670773

Mobile: 087 1234025

Email: mairem.oleary@hse.ie



Additional information of FPSHP courses run nationally please go to www.sexualwellbeing.ie click on, *Training*, then click on *sexual health promotion*, where you will find a list of all the locations and contact numbers.

Alternatively, please contact Tracey Tobin, National Co-ordinator of the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion **Mobile:** 087-9028590 or **Email:** tracy.tobin@hse.ie

Sexually Transmitted Infections Foundation (STIF) training

The aim of Sexually Transmitted Infections Foundation (STIF) Core & Plus training is to equip participants with the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes for the effective management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) outside the GUM setting.

Who might attend STIF? The training is designed for doctors and nurses working in general practice, family planning and reproductive health, GUM, health advisers, secondary care clinicians who may encounter patients with STIs (e.g. O&G, A&E, rheumatology and ophthalmology), pharmacists and school nurses.

It is recommended to attend both days although if you have attended a STIF course in the past 3 years, you can attend the STIF PLUS day to update your knowledge and skills.

It is highly recommended that delegates study the appropriate modules in e-Learning for Health before attending.



This will entail around 8-12 hours of study depending on your experience. Further information about the modules will be provided by the course organisers approximately four weeks before the course commences.

AUTUMN 2019 DATES:

STIF CORE 12th October 2019 and

STIF PLUS 13th October 2019

Venue: The Catherine McAuley Centre, 21 Nelson Street, Dublin 7.

Course Director: Dr Lambert & Dr Low

For a course flier and course application enquiries, please contact the course organiser: Gordana Avramovic
Tel: +00353 1 716 4562 or Email: gavramovic@mater.ie

HIV Ireland – Upcoming Education & Training events

information supplied by Susan Donlon HIV Ireland



- October 2nd 2019 Understanding Chemsex Half-day Education and Training – Cost, free of charge
- October 15th 2019 HIV: ending new transmissions in Ireland – Cost, free of charge
- December 3rd 2019 Let's Talk about HIV, Stigma and Discrimination – Cost, free of charge.

Venue for all training is: HIV Ireland, 70 Eccles Street. Dublin 7.

Advanced booking required for all training events; please contact HIV Ireland to book a place on these upcoming training events Queries to susan.donlon@hiveireland.ie

Sexual Health: Masterclass courses for healthcare professionals on unplanned pregnancy

A Series of Masterclasses for anyone who encounters an unplanned pregnancy in the course of their professional life. This may include teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, chaplains, all pastoral care workers and youth workers.

The Masterclasses were developed with the Department of Adult and Community Education, Maynooth University.

Masterclasses are available from October to November 2019.

Where are they held?

***Masterclass 1:** Law Regulation of Health (Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 Friday 11th October, 2019 9:30am – 4.00pm Centre of Nurse & Midwifery Education, St. Mary's Campus, Castlebar*

Masterclass 2:

Termination of Pregnancy: Dealing with Complex Issues
Friday 18th October, 2019 10am – 4.30pm John Hume Building, Maynooth University



Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth

Masterclass 3: Understanding Fatal Fetal Abnormality as a Crisis Pregnancy Friday 08th November, 2019 10am – 4:30pm John Hume Building, Maynooth University

Masterclass 4: Supporting Healthy Team Dynamics in the delivery of Termination of Pregnancy Services Friday 29th November, 2019 10am – 4:30pm John Hume Building, Maynooth University

For more information contact: Carmen Ruiz on: 01 708 3752 / crisispregnancymasterclasses@mu.ie

** For Masterclass 1 which is taking place in Castlebar, please contact Ms Annette Cuddy on: 094 9042074/ Annette.Cuddy@hse.ie*

The features section is made possible by the following authors giving of their time and expertise in their respective fields; for any queries or further information on the features in this section please contact the relevant author.

Seeking resolution for an illness that does not exist: The case for Health-Check as prevention for HIV among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa

by Ms Ifedinma B. Dimbo MA, AIDS Care Education Training (ACET) Ireland



In the earlier times, when we fell sick and the usual go-to 'home remedies' have failed we attend our GPs for resolution. In contemporary times however, it is now the norm for many people to go for regular health check-ups whether sick or not. The reason for this pre-emptive behaviour is to monitor and lower the risk of potential conditions or diseases before they turn into problems. In this respect, early detection of potential conditions gives one the opportunity to get the right treatment quickly and complications averted¹. Ultimately, ones' life span is increased, health is improved and potential healthcare costs greatly reduced in the long run. However, it can be argued that the culture of regular health check-up is a somewhat normalized behaviour in the developed countries.

In the African context perhaps it is not a normalized behaviour to seek out non-existent sicknesses ahead of its time. One consistent issue among the many findings from a research I carried out for ACET Ireland on why black immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa living in Ireland do not take up HIV testing opportunities as much as other groups, was the absence of the need to attend a clinic. In order words, what would be the point of going to see a doctor when one is not sick? This is because we were not socialized into 'going to look for sickness' which is what health check-ups seem to imply. As one Church Leader interviewed puts it, "...people do not want to go and know if they are sick or not... where will they start from being positive?"



The recent report by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre show that those born in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) were among those presenting in greater numbers with late diagnosis of HIV. This increases the risk of transmission and poor health outcomes² as clinical care would commence late.

Of new diagnoses in Ireland among those born in SSA, over 60% were late diagnoses with 31% advanced³. Furthermore, while ethnicity is a very recently initiated indicator in HIV data recording in Ireland, research from Public Health England demonstrated that black-African Men living with HIV were the group most likely not to have been diagnosed early (30%v ,24% as total)⁴.

The very important issue here is "late and advanced diagnosis" and perhaps it is pertinent to surmise that the culture of not availing of health-checks perhaps may account for this. In exploring this culture of non-health check-ups by us black Africans we look at 3 key areas; psychological, spiritual and economics so that a clearer understanding can be yielded and perhaps solutions can be proffered therefrom in respect of testing for HIV.

Psychological Implications:

The most relevant implication for going for health checks is that sicknesses that have not presented themselves may be located and therapeutic regimen applied for instance locating and, for example, treating high blood pressure may prevent the occurrence of premature heart attack and or stroke.

However, the idea that you are going to attend a doctor in order to seek out sickness amounts, in the mind of the immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa we interviewed, to 'looking for what was not looking for you.' Thus, if you provoke sickness and it came calling, you are then the architect of your problem and you are going to carry it on your head alone.

It may appear illogical, silly even, but it is what it is, in so far as you are not sick, one is not likely to seek out a doctor for non-illness concerns. As it stands there are many things vying for our attention back home and going out there to find sickness to bring home is not likely to be a priority as it is only the sick that needs the services of a doctor it is said. The psychology at work here is that you get what you look for and so nobody goes looking.

Spiritual Implications:

Belief is a very strong influencer of behaviour. The dual nature of life see us black Africans believing that what happens in the spiritual realms impacts our lives in the corporal world as such we are mindful of what we do. In my doctoral research that explores the core reason that underpin the illness behaviour of outsourcing pharmaceutical products by some Nigerians living here in Ireland, to take care of their illnesses concerns show that 80% of my respondents believe that "sicknesses can be sent by people who do not wish others well".

Imagine then that these ill-wishers are watching you looking for future sicknesses in the now; this may prompt them into sending some to you since you do not want to leave well alone! Therefore the appeal to "know your status" in terms of HIV for example, may need some qualification as "knowing" may be bound to a Western way of thinking which is anathema to the experience of those of other cultures.

Economic or financial implications:

Finally, poverty and illiteracy are big problems in Sub-Saharan African countries and the masses suffer many hardships. The rich members of these societies may indulge in the "luxury" of attending health checks as they really need to be alive to enjoy their wealth. The educated perhaps because they knew better and as such can avail of health checks but the majority of the people do not have the money nor the time to 'waste' on frivolous things like looking to find out if you may be sick in the indeterminate future. Therefore the presence of a "free" health service can be inadequate to engage the black African immigrant. There must also be an engagement with their cultural perception of the health check.

Health Check vs. Testing for HIV:

There are a range of findings as mentioned above in the ACET Ireland research which illustrate the particular needs, lenses and insights of black-African people in Ireland. Stigma may be a dominant theme but central to our findings are also the themes of memory, agency and place. The memory of a strong HIV=death paradigm and its implications for resisting testing is explored. The agency and role of the individual in relationship to health professional is investigated showing that our cultural understanding of illness, prevention and death are found to differ significantly from the White-Irish assumptions.

Finally, the not 'taunting the tail of the Tiger' or non-health checks behaviour by us black Africans appear to underscore the resistance to the revealing of future sickness and as such may account for the lower rate uptake of testing for HIV and therefore problematic in the prevention, transmission and treatment of the disease. However, being aware of these nuances in our ways of being and doing may go a long way to aid the formulation of appropriate testing strategies and promotional education that will suit the needs of this population and perhaps go long ways to prompt an increase in the uptake of HIV testing.

Illness must be felt through sickness and as one community leader of an ethnic group succinctly commented, *"the reality is that beyond the issue of somebody thinking that their world has come to an end if they find that they have HIV...you can only discuss what you know...if somebody is not sick...they do not have the motivation to go and find out about something if that will be the end of their life" to drive home the core of the problem.*

Organization: ACET (Aids Care Education & Treatment) Ireland

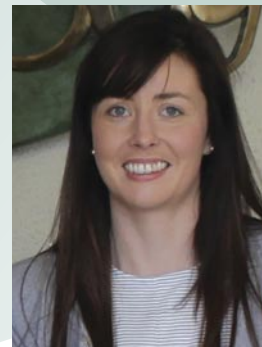
For a copy of ACET's Mind the Gap report on the low uptake of HIV testing among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in Ireland, Please contact dublin@acet.ie

References

- ¹ <https://mypvhc.com/importance-regular-check-ups/>
- ² HIV in Ireland, Annual Report 2017, Health Protection Surveillance Centre.
- ³ Late Diagnosis is defined as CD4 cell count less than 350 cells/ μ l at diagnosis or an AIDS defining illness at diagnosis. Advanced HIV infection is defined as CD4 count less than 200 cells/ μ l at diagnosis or an AIDS defining illness at diagnoses
- ⁴ HIV in the United Kingdom 2014, Public Health England. We note here that UK has seen a significant recent decline in HIV incidences among black African men and women (78% drop over the decade to 2017).

Sexually Healthy Adolescents: Exploring the need for Post Primary schools to provide inclusive Relationships and Sexuality education

by Sinéad O'Callaghan, Schools Liaison Officer, Griffith College



On the 29th of March 2018, the 'Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill' was introduced to Dáil Éireann. At present, this bill is still required to undergo 8 additional stages before it is enacted into law by the President of Ireland. This bill aims to guarantee the rights of all students to receive factual and objective relationships and sexuality education, without regard to the characteristic spirit of the school. Students themselves have requested for their education system to provide them with factual sexual health information, as highlighted by Youth Work Ireland's National Youth Consultation (2018);

Sex Education:

'Young people want reliable, accurate and consistent information regarding sex. They also want a voice in curriculum design so topics relevant to their generation are included'

Health & Safety:

'Young people want to know how to be safe sexually and how to stay safe, particularly when it comes to protection against STI's'

Contraception:

'Young people want reliable information on the methods, choice and uses of contraception availability and they want free access to contraception'

Relationships:

'Young people referred to the need to respect different types of relationships, both sexual and non-sexual, healthy and unhealthy as well as LGBTQI+ and Trans.'

Incorporating holistic sexual health education programmes into second level schools is one of the best ways to educate students and prepare them for life as sexually healthy individuals. Adolescence is a journey of exploration and discovery. The whole school environment can be a vital support to students at this stage of their development. It's no secret that young people nowadays have regular and uncensored access to the internet. This can expose them to a wide range of sexually explicit material such as pornography, sexual acts of violence, a distorted portrayal of women as well as homophobic bullying or discrimination. According to Kohut and Stulhofer (2018, P 2) *'pornography may impact adolescents sexual risk taking, sexual functioning, body image, sexual objectification and sexual aggression'*, who go on to highlight that *'internet pornography may threaten many facets of adolescent development and well – being'*.



The 'Junior Certificate Wellbeing Guidelines' were issued by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2017), two of the main aims include;

1. 'Children and young people are or have a positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health'
2. 'Children and young people are or have protection from bullying and discrimination'

In line with these guidelines, it's important for schools and teachers to acknowledge that '12 years was confirmed as the most common age of self – awareness of LGBTI identity' (Collins et al., 2016, P 8). As this is generally the time when students transition from Primary to Post – Primary education, the second level curriculum needs to represent LGBTIQ+ students by having anti-LGBTIQ+ bullying policies in place and providing opportunities in class to discuss LGBTIQ+ relationships and sexuality. 'Belong To Youth Services', the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people in Ireland, collaborate nationally with schools to implement a 'Stand Up Awareness Week'.

All second level schools could be involved in this initiative, taking a stand against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, to make schools a safe and supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ students.

The widespread bullying endured by LGBTIQ+ youths in Ireland is outlined by the national LGBT Ireland study commissioned by GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) highlighting, when compared to other youths, LGBTI young people in this study had;

- 2 times the level of self-harm
- 3 times the level of suicide
- 4 times the level of severe/extremely severe stress, anxiety and depression. (Higgins et al., 2016, P 3).

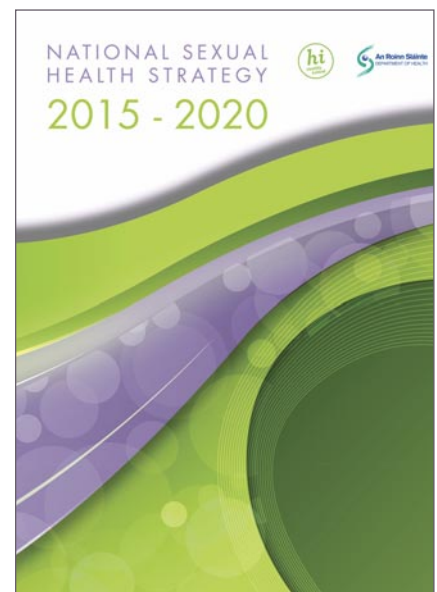
The National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 – 2020, commissioned by the Department of Health (DoH, 2015) suggests that *'the State has a responsibility to ensure that children and young people receive comprehensive relationship and sexuality education in order to help them attain the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills required for healthy sexual expression'* (P 36). This strategy recommends *'providing teachers with appropriate training within available resources to equip them to deliver relationship and sexuality education programmes'* (P 38).

There's definite opportunity to collaborate with the Health Service Executive, to incorporate their 'Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion' as a compulsory module in Undergraduate and Post Graduate teaching and education third level courses.

Shelven et al., (2009) define inclusive education as *'the valuing of diversity in the community and the contribution that every person has to make'* (P 2). Nowadays, potentially every second level school prides itself on their ability to foster and provide an inclusive and holistic educational experience. On the contrary, Higgins et al., (2016, P 6 – 8) states from the research that;

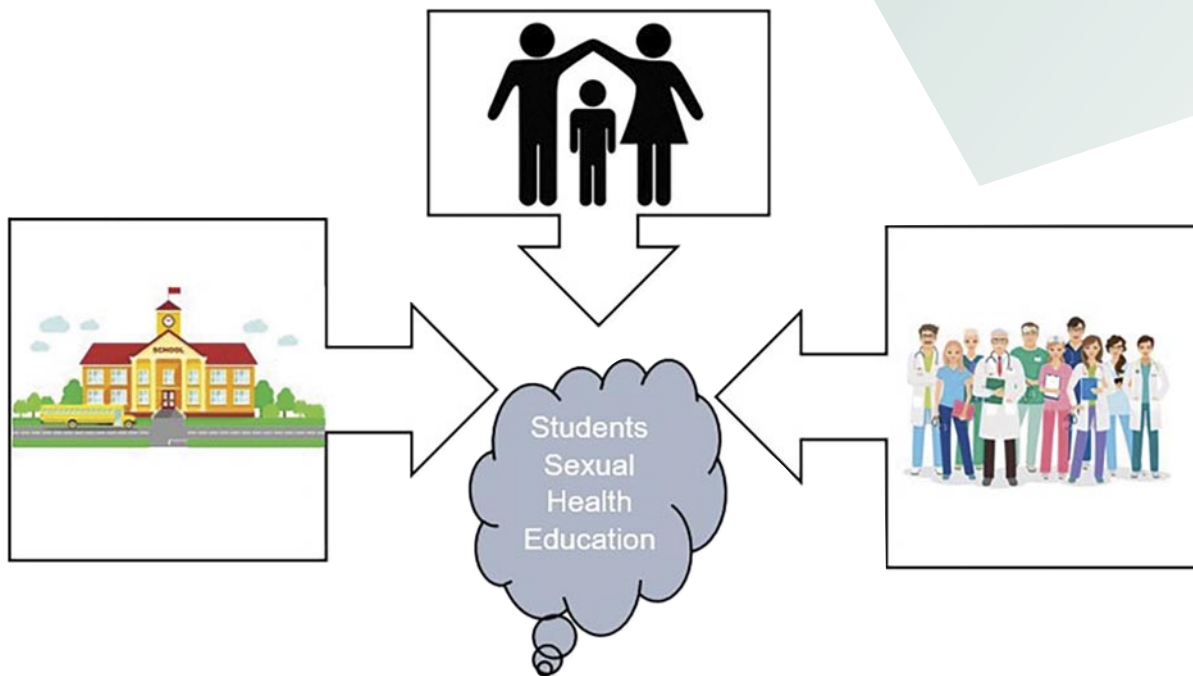
- Only 20% of LGBTI students felt they belonged completely in their school
- Only 44% of LGBTI students said they received positive affirmation of their identity
- 67% witnessed bullying of other LGBTI students in their school
- 50% of LGBTI students personally experienced anti-LGBTI bullying
- 1 in 4 missed or skipped school to avoid negative treatment due to being LGBTI
- 1 in 4 considered leaving school early and approximately 1 in 20 quit school.

It's important to note that this is an international issue with similar research emerging from England and America. In June 2019, a report from Children's Charity NSPCC in England revealed that their Childline service receives 16 calls a day from struggling LGBTI youths. The counsellors at Childline have confirmed that homophobic bullying was mentioned in 573 counselling sessions with youths.



SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION IN ACTION

Historically, the primary educators of children are their parents or guardians, followed closely by educational institutions regarded as the secondary educator of the child. Encouraging a collaborative approach towards relationships and sexuality education is advised. Ideally, this incorporates a collaborative approach from parents, schools and health professionals working as a unit to discuss, educate and explore sexual health concepts through the medium of the second level school.



Sinéad is currently undertaking her Master's studies at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) in 'Advanced Facilitation Skills for Promoting Health and Well – Being'. Her research is focused on the facilitation of an inclusive environment for LGBTQI+ students in Post Primary schools in Ireland.

She is currently recruiting Principal's and Vice Principals to participate in her research. Her dissertation aims to raise awareness regarding the importance of relevant, factual and inclusive sexual health education for adolescents and to inform school policy which can contribute to informed practise for second level professionals.

If you're interested in participating in her research, or to enquire you can contact Sinéad by e-mail at schools@griffith.ie.

Sinéad was previously a Home Economics and SPHE teacher and is also a past participant on the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion, Cork 2019.

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OCTOBER

1st - 31st
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

w: www.cancer.ie

1st - 7th
National Breastfeeding Week

w: www.breastfeeding.ie

NOVEMBER

1st - 30th
**Movember Prostate
Cancer Awareness Month**

w: www.cancer.ie

19th
International Men's Day

w: www.mhfi.org

5th
**International Day for the Elimination of
Violence against Women**

w: [www.un.org/en/events/
endviolenceday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/)

DECEMBER

1st Dec
World AIDS Day

w: www.worldaidsday.org/events
and also www.acet.ie

3rd
**International Day of Persons with
Disabilities**

w: [http://www.un.org/en/events/
disabilitiesday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/disabilitiesday/)

Inclusion Ireland
<http://www.inclusionireland.ie>

10th
**Human Rights Day Irish Human
Rights Commission**

w: www.ihrc.ie [www.un.org/en/events/
humanrightsday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday/)

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www.myoptions.ie

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Saturday 10am to 2pm

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