



Annual Report 2013

Gay Health Network (GHN)



ABOUT THE GAY HEALTH NETWORK (GHN)

GHN is an All-Ireland network of organisations and individuals with a shared ethos and commitment to achieving the purpose of the network, sharing ideas, work, resources and experiences. Since its foundation in 1994, GHN has been actively publishing and distributing HIV and safer sex information for men who have sex with men (MSM), as well as conducting and published vital research on sexual health in this area.

PURPOSE OF GHN

GHN's purpose is to promote HIV prevention and sexual health awareness among men who have sex with men (MSM), with a focus on men living with HIV, and to combat the stigma associated with HIV.

GHN OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of GHN are:

- The promotion of HIV prevention and sexual health awareness among gay and bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), nationally, and in specific communities.
- Addressing and challenging HIV-related stigma and discrimination.
- Commissioning of key research in the area of HIV and sexual health among MSM, including men living with HIV.

The subsidiary objectives of GHN are:

- Promotion of HIV prevention and sexual health awareness through specific programmes and campaigns.
- Ongoing development of a dedicated HIV and sexual health website for MSM.
- The publication of a quarterly newsletter to increase sector-wide communications on the issues.
- The publication of key research reports on relevant issues.
- The publication of HIV and sexual health leaflets and booklets.

MEMBERSHIP

GHNs current active members includes many individual men, including men living with HIV, and includes representatives from the following organisations:

- BeLonG To Youth Service
- Dublin AIDS Alliance
- Gay Community News (GCN)
- Gay Doctors Ireland
- Gay Men's Health Service, HSE
- Gay Switchboard Ireland
- Open Heart House
- Outhouse LGBT Community Centre
- Positive Now
- Rainbow Support Services @ The Red Ribbon Project
- The Rainbow Project, Belfast and Derry
- Union of Students Ireland

Many other LGBT- and HIV-related organisations around Ireland support the work and projects of GHN.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

GHN develops a strategic/action plan every three years. The most recent action plan was developed in 2010 with actions agreed up to and including 2013, with the following strategic objectives:

- Strategic Objective 1: Develop a national HIV Prevention Campaign targeting MSM.
- Strategic Objective 2: Enhance promotion of the Man2Man.ie website.
- Strategic Objective 3: Increase access to condoms and lube among MSM.
- Strategic Objective 4: Engage in relevant research to inform and enhance the work of GHN.
- Strategic Objective 5: Review and develop GHN structures and communications to ensure capacity to deliver the 3-year action plan.

The actions and activities of GHN are evidence-based, closely aligned and strongly linked with the findings and recommendations of research and relevant reports, including:

- The European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) 2010 and All-Ireland report findings:
 - Man2Man Report One: Our Community.
 - Man2Man Report Two: Living with HIV.
 - Man2Man Report Three: Our Sex Lives.
- HIV Annual Surveillance Reports on Diagnosed HIV infections among MSM in Ireland published by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).
- Annual Reports from the Gay Men's Health Service, HSE.
- LGBT Health: Towards meeting the Health Care Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People, HSE, 2009.
- National AIDS Strategy Committee (NASC) HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan 2008-2012.
- The All-Ireland Gay Men's Sex Survey 2000 to 2008 (Real Lives, Real Lives 2 and Real Lives 3).

GHN SUMMARY ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

Man2Man.ie 2011/2012

This joint GHN and HSE initiative is a national HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Awareness programme targeting men who have sex with men (MSM). Following 12 months promotion (Dec 2011 to Dec 2012) a report was published in 2013 outlining the activities and achievements of the programme to date. Further development and promotion of the initiative continued throughout 2013 as outlined below.

- **Summary Man2Man Report 2011/2012 (published 2013):**

- 81% increase in website visitors to Man2Man.ie in 2012 (compared to 2011).
- 1,650% increase in views on Man2ManIreland YouTube page from Ireland, where videos were made available (pre- -v- post-campaign)
- 65% increase in calls to LGBT helplines in 2012 in the 10 counties specifically targeted in the Dublin North East and Dublin Mid-Leinster regions (compared to 2011).
- 9% increase in MSM attending GMHS HSE Clinic in 2012 (compared to 2011). This included a 5% increase in new (first-time) attendees; and a 25% attendance increase of men living in rural Ireland, particularly targeted counties in the HSE Dublin North East and Dublin Mid Leinster regions.
- 8,387 clicks to the Man2Man.ie website from the banner impressions on social contact website Gaydar.
- 101,700 postcards and posters distributed across 30 counties in Ireland and targeted advertising in 20 local newspapers across 11 counties.
- 100,000 safer sex packs produced for free distribution.
- Translating Man2Man: the programme materials and videos were translated into 8 other languages (Arabic, French, Irish, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish).

- **Sustaining Man2Man.ie**

Following the success of the Man2Man.ie programme throughout 2012, GHN and the HSE agreed the importance of building on the achievements of the programme, to promote consistent and sustained HIV and STI prevention messages among MSM in Ireland. Arising from the programme, the following recommendations and actions were agreed, with support funding received from HSE Health Promotion, HSE Social Inclusion Unit and the MAC AIDS Fund:

- National promotion and continuous development of Man2Man.ie, the only HIV and sexual health information and resource website specifically targeting MSM in Ireland.
- Promote social inclusion and increase access to information for harder-to-reach groups living outside of urban areas through social media, and print and broadcast media.
- Initiate a peer-led volunteer outreach service to promote HIV prevention and sexual health at social venues, and distribute condoms and lube.
- Respond to emerging trends, in consultation with key stakeholders, by developing targeted and tailored HIV and STI prevention initiatives.

Man2Man.ie 2013

In consideration the success of Man2Man.ie, this GHN programme is now a programme 'brand' for all activities/projects of GHN. The following projects were developed and implemented as part of the Man2Man.ie programme throughout 2013:

- **Man2Man.ie Promotion:**

GHN continued promotion of the Man2Man.ie programme and website, as well as the promotion of key related services including the Gay Men's Health Service Clinic, the Gay Switchboard Ireland, the new Drop-In and Email Services, and the availability of free condoms and lube through a range of organisations and outreach services. Channels of promotion included:

- Monthly advertising in GCN magazine.
- Facebook and Twitter promotion (including through member organisation pages).
- A web banner on the social contact website, Gaydar.
- Promotion at a range of LGBT-related events including the GAZE Film Festival, Dublin Pride, The Outing Festival, and the IGLFA European Championships.
- Promoting social inclusion through promotion in Metro Eireann, Ireland's only multicultural newspaper.

- **Man2Man.ie Website:**

The website was maintained and continually updated. Information on the availability of HIV and STI testing, on the availability of PEP, and the development of a new 'Resources' page, were among the main updates.

- **Luv Bugs:**

GHN produced six leaflets promoting STI prevention, including information on transmission and testing. Leaflets were produced and distributed on Gonorrhoea, Syphilis, Chlamydia, Hepatitis B, HIV, and PEP with promotion also via social media sites.

- **Drop-In Sexual Health Service:**

A Drop-In service for sexual health information and support was launched on 30th November 2013 by Gay Switchboard Ireland in partnership with GHN as part of the Man2Man.ie programme. The Drop-In Service takes place every Saturday from 2pm to 4pm in Outhouse LGBT Community Centre in Dublin and is for over 18's. A new email service was also launched (ask@ghn.ie) for those who are unable to drop-in.

- **Outreach Co-ordination:**

As a result of the promotion of the Man2Man.ie programme in 2012, GHN experienced an increase in the amount of LGBT groups and organisations requesting sexual health resources (information leaflets and condoms) and training/education throughout 2013. A new 'Outreach Co-ordination' system was established supported by volunteers involved with the Gay Switchboard Ireland and a new email service (outreach@ghn.ie) was created to support the requests. In addition to responding to requests, Gay Switchboard Ireland volunteers also commenced outreach at gay social venues in Dublin distributing free condoms and information leaflets.

Outreach Highlights 2013

- Supported a range of requests from LGBT-related organisations in the provision of free condoms and lube for events and for distribution to services users, as well as requests for HIV and sexual health-related educational workshops.

- Outreach at gay social venues in Dublin re-commenced and continues on a monthly basis with the support of Gay Switchboard Ireland volunteers.
- International Gay and Lesbian Football Association (IGLFA) European Championships 2013: Hosted by the Dublin Devils FC, this event took place from 13th to 16th June in Dublin City University. GHN sponsored Man2Man condom packs for inclusion in the welcome packs and the event was attended by teams from throughout Europe including the UK, Germany, Sweden, France, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Denmark and Russia.
- Dublin Pride Parade: Outreach was conducted at the annual Dublin Pride Parade on 29th June, distributing free condoms and information leaflets.
- The Outing Festival 2013: The first ever gay and lesbian matchmaking festival formed part of the annual Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival which took place on 30th August to 1st September. Man2Man.ie was promoted at the festival with the distribution of free condom packs.
- Outreach was conducted in third-level colleges for specific events including Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance (SHAG) Week and Freshers Week.

RESEARCH AND POLICY SUMMARY 2013

- **HSE Men's Health Conference:**

GHN participated at this conference which took place on 13th June, with a poster presentation on the Man2Man.ie programme and a workshop on the inclusion of MSM in future policies on men's health specific to the Healthy Ireland Framework.

- **Irish AIDS Day**

For Irish AIDS Day 2013 (15th June annually), GHN issued a press release and launched the Man2Man 2011/2012 programme report (see previous paragraph for summary). This also formed part of the 11th Annual Gay Health Forum, in partnership with the Gay Men's Health Service, HSE.

- **11th Annual Gay Health Forum (GHF11):**

In partnership with the Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS), GHN is part of the organising committee for this annual forum which took place on 21st June 2013. The results of the joint GHN and HSE Man2Man programme for 2011/2012 were presented at the forum.

- **Man2Man Report 3: Our Sex Lives:**

The third report from the All-Ireland findings of the 2010 European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) was published by GHN, in partnership with GMHS HSE, in 2013. This third report focuses on sexual happiness, experience and behaviour, such as unprotected anal intercourse, condom access and use, as well as substance use. The report can be viewed and downloaded at www.ghn.ie as well as the previous two reports - *Man2Man Report One: Our Community* and *Man2Man Report Two: Living with HIV*.

The EMIS data was significant to the development of the current joint GHN and HSE Man2Man.ie National HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Awareness Programme for MSM. GMHS HSE was the lead partner in promoting the EMIS Survey in Ireland, and this survey represents the largest ever sample of MSM across the 32 counties of Ireland, with a total of 2,610 valid respondents.

- **RCPI Sexual Health Awareness Week (SHAW) 12th to 14th November 2013:**

GHN participated at Sexual Health Awareness Week (SHAW) in November 2013, organised by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). The report of the joint GHN and HSE Man2Man programme for 2011/2012 was presented at the event, as well as a presentation on the third Man2Man research report (Our Sex Lives), a presentation by GMHS on men attending the clinic, and actions in the community presented by BeLonG To Youth Services and Gay Switchboard Ireland.

- **World AIDS Day**

For World AIDS Day 2013 (1st December annually), GHN, in partnership with Gay Switchboard Ireland, launched the new Drop-In Sexual Health Service. A community meeting was held in the Outhouse LGBT Community Centre to launch the new service, and included presentations and discussion on 21 years of the Gay Men's Health Service, the third Man2Man Research Report: Our Sex Lives, a presentation on HIV and MSM by Dr. Shay Keating, Gay Men's Health Service, and a presentation on GHN actions in the community.

- **Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children**
 GHN was invited to make a presentation to the Joint Committee on Health and Children on 5th December 2013. The presentation focused on HIV prevention strategies of GHN targeting MSM (the Man2Man.ie programme and services and activities of GHN member organisations), with presentations also from GMHS HSE and Positive Now.
- **National Sexual Health Strategy**
 The development of Ireland's first National Sexual Health Strategy continued in 2013 and GHN members participate on the Education and Prevention Working Group and the Services Working Group.
- **Gonorrhoea Control Group**
 GHN participates in a multidisciplinary Gonorrhoea Control Group which was convened by Public Health in HSE-East in December 2012 to investigate and control the increase in gonorrhoea. GHN responded to the increases in Gonorrhoea infections among MSM by developing the 'Luv Bugs' project.
- **Quality Action: Improving HIV Prevention in Europe**
 Following participation in a roadshow/seminar in 2012 on Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance in HIV Prevention, GHN members have applied to participate in '*Quality Action*' training on tools for evaluating HIV prevention projects and programmes. The training is due to take place in 2014, and is organised by the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Education and Prevention sub-committee of the National AIDS Strategy Committee.

FINANCE AND FUNDING SUMMARY 2013

- **Audited Accounts**

GHN is a registered company limited by guarantee, company no. 499954, and a registered charity, CHY19908. The financial year for GHN commences on 14th June annually. Audited accounts for the year ended 13th June 2013 were submitted to the Companies Registration Office (CRO) and are available on its website (www.cro.ie).

- **Funding Support**

In 2013, GHN received the following funding support:

Friends for Friends	€3,000.00
MAC AIDS Fund	€24,445.97
HSE Social Inclusion	€30,000.00
HSE Health Promotion	€25,000.00
Enterprise Rent-a-Car	€465.00
Other Donations and Fundraising	€479.00
GMHS, HSE	€6,800.00

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GHN would like to express sincere thanks and appreciation to all funders, and to those who donated. This funding will enable GHN to build on the achievements of the Man2Man.ie programme to date throughout 2013 and 2014.

GHN would like to express its thanks and appreciation to all who supported GHN activities and projects throughout 2013. There are too many to mention individually!

GHN activities would not be possible without the support of its member organisations, and individual members, many of whom volunteer their time, skills and experience to achieving GHN objectives.

The Directors holding office in 2013: Kevin O'Brien (Secretary), Lysander Preston, Thomas Strong (Chairperson).