

MESMAG Autumn 2009

Testing Targets

A new report called Testing targets: findings from the United Kingdom Gay Men's Sex Survey 2007 has been released.

The survey was carried out by Sigma Research, on behalf of the CHAPS partnership. It is the largest survey of its kind in the world, with over 6,000 men taking part in 2007.

The findings indicate a big increase in the number of Gay men who have ever had an HIV test. Whereas less than half of all men surveyed in 2002 said they'd ever tested for HIV, the latest findings shows that 66% of men confirmed they have had an HIV test.

Tom Doyle, Director of Yorkshire MESMAC, a CHAPS partners said, 'This is particularly encouraging news, early diagnosis of HIV gives people far more choices in their lives and can help men reduce onward transmission. Quick and easily accessible HIV testing services are an essential tool in the fight against HIV. This is why Yorkshire MESMAC are committed to rolling out our free, confidential and rapid HIV testing services to other areas that we work in.'

Among men that had ever tested, one-in-seven (15.2%) had tested positive for HIV infection. Testing for HIV and testing positive for HIV were most common among men living in London, men in their 30s and 40s and men with 30 or more male partners in the last year. However, testing and testing positive was common among all groups of Gay men and in all regions of the UK.

Dr. Ford Hickson from Sigma Research said: "We want to say a big thank to you everyone who contributed to the survey including the 130 organisations that collaborated with us and all the men that took the time to complete it. It's crucial that we hear first hand about the experiences of Gay men when it comes to sexual health. The survey is taking a break this year but keep an eye out for 2010 when it will be part of a pan-European version undertaken in up to 20 languages."

For a copy of the report visit:<http://www.sigmaresearch.org.uk/files/report2009f.pdf>

As and When Testing Service

Yorkshire MESMAC are now offering an 'as and when' service delivering rapid HIV testing, along with Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening at any time when a member of staff is available, all you need to do is call the Leeds office to make an appointment.

Pete Boyle tells us "The 'as and when' service enables us to offer a more flexible approach to delivering rapid HIV testing. Clients who aren't able to make it to our Thursday evening drop-in sessions can simply give us a call and arrange a time that's convenient to them. Once you have had your pre-test discussion with our trained staff we can give you your result within half an hour."

The as and when service complements Yorkshire MESMAC's Thursday evening drop-in from 6 – 8pm from a scene venue and our city centre offices. At the drop-in we are able to offer Hepatitis B vaccinations, in addition to rapid HIV testing, and Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening.

For more information, or to book an appointment, please contact Pete Boyle or Tom Hunt on 0113 2444209.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP FOR
GAY, LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE
(AND PEOPLE QUESTIONING THEIR
SEXUALITY)

Facilitated by a Mental Health/Well-being
worker from Yorkshire MESMAC

Starts October 2009
Meeting in Bradford

For further information contact:
Clive on 07913 264967 or c.spendlove@mesmac.co.uk

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Testing Times in Wakefield

The hugely popular and successful Testing Times which has been running in Leeds for the past three years is now available in Wakefield. The service will be running from the New Union in Wakefield City Centre on a Friday evening, between 7-9pm. On offer will be Hepatitis B vaccinations along with Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea screening and people will be able to talk to a nurse on any health or sexual health issues and get information. This service is confidential, convenient and friendly. If you need any further information please contact Jeff Platts on 01924 211116 or email j.platts@mesmac.co.uk

If you are interested in Volunteering for Testing Times or any other Yorkshire MESMAC service please contact Ann Marie on 0113 2444209. All Volunteers will have an induction and receive on-going training and support.

Sunday Lunch Club in Wakefield

At a loose end on Sundays, are you interested in meeting for lunch in the Wakefield area? Relax in the afternoon with like minded people, and then this could be for you. The idea is to meet once a month to start with, if it takes off then more regular meets. It is a simple idea, pick a venue, turn up, meet others, enjoy. If you are interested then please contact Jeff on 01924 211116 or email j.platts@mesmac.co.uk

PUGWASH DAY!!

The Fruitbowl youth group enjoyed a grand day out courtesy of the PROJECT PUGWASH based in Wakefield. The day's activities consisted of group members being part of the crew. This involved working the locks, steering the boat, cooking, baking, and cleaning. The day was an excellent way to teach the young people involved everyday life skills as well as learning to work as part of a team. A fab day was had by all and we would like to thank everybody involved for making it happen. Thanks PUGWASH!!

WellFit Exercise Project - Wakefield

WellFit Exercise Project in Wakefield for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual community is now well and truly established; the aim is to get people together to take part in exercise and is aimed at all levels of fitness, ages and abilities, ranging from Badminton, aerobics, circuit training, strength training and core stability and body conditioning. Long term this can lead to many health benefits along with building confidence and self esteem, and the best thing is that it is FREE.. We are also planning social meetings, the first being a river boat cruise along the canals.

The group is run by two qualified fitness instructors who work for Yorkshire MESMAC and will also be offering weight management and nutritional and health information and help members build personal exercise programmes.

It doesn't matter if you've never taken part in any form of exercise before or not, we all start somewhere, if you are interested please contact Jeff on 01924 211116 or email: j.platts@mesmac.co.uk

Wakefield Pride raises £2000 for Yorkshire MESMAC

Wakefield Pride 09 raised £2000 all of which was kindly donated to Yorkshire Mesmac. The Pride event was organised by the New Union who helped raise the funds along with David Baxter who is the authorised distributor for Utility Warehouse Discount Club in Wakefield organised a raffle and raised £500 which he kindly donated to the overall Pride funds

Jeff Platts and Sally Kitson from Yorkshire Mesmac would like to personally thank everyone who contributed for their great generosity. This money will make a real contribution towards the health and wellbeing of the LGBT community in Wakefield. The funds will be used to support the Wellfit Exercise Project which provides free exercise for people of all ages and the Fruitbowl Youth Project which supports LGBT youth in the Wakefield District.

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Celebrate & Advocate Bradford

This is an exciting new project which aims to bring people together to celebrate the strengths and diversities of the LGBT community in Bradford.

It is a creative project which will be delivered in the centre of Bradford on a weekly basis by artists, a film/animation maker and a graphic designer as well as workers from Yorkshire MESMAC and the Equity Centre who have developed the project in collaboration with Artworks, a creative arts based community charity.

The sessions will involve art, photography, writing, creativity, fun, personal development, goal setting and hopefully some tea and cake!

The exciting part (as well as getting to meet lots of interesting people, learning new transferable skills and working out what you want from life or work and how to get it) is that we will be working on a series of artworks which will be exhibited in a city centre gallery during Bradford Pride in May 2010.

As well as showing your work in a gallery, you will also get the opportunity to create a film or animation, which will be shown on the big screen in Centenary Square.

No experience of art or creative activities is necessary and we welcome all who would like to be involved.

The sessions are due to run once a week from October and we kicked off the whole thing with a launch event at The Love Apple in Bradford on Tuesday October 6th.

For further information please contact Jonathan at Yorkshire MESMAC on 01274 395815 or email bradford@mesmac.co.uk

or look for 'Celebrate and Advocate Bradford' on Facebook and join the group.

Lesbian Gay & Bisexual Mental Health & Well Being Project Awareness Raising Workshops & Website

The Autumn series of Awareness raising workshops are underway attracting a wide range of professionals from wide and varied backgrounds. As with the previous series of workshops, they are proving to be popular with half the dates already booked up.

The chief aim of the workshops are to raise awareness of LGB perspectives on issues surrounding mental health and emotional well being with the aim of providing LGB communities within the Bradford & Airedale area a more responsive and sensitive service from mental health care providers. The workshop covers a variety of areas including external and internalised homophobia, impact of family/peer rejection, lifestyles choices and the potential impact on mental well being among other issues.

At the time of writing there are spaces on 2 dates - 27th October and 15th December. Further details can be found on the Yorkshire MESMAC web-page.

Work has also been progressing on the planning and organising of a National Conference on LGB Mental Health planned to be held in April/May of 2010. We are hopeful of having nationally and internationally recognised speaker inputting to the event on areas as diverse as Gay Men and Eating Disorders, Same Sex Domestic Violence and OCD in relation to sexual activity/addiction.

We are continuing to develop the web pages as a source of information on the area of LGB Mental Health. We have added a link to a section called "Information Sheets". This is planned to be an interesting and informative section on LGB mental health issues which we hope will be useful to both LGB people and professional in the field of mental health.

James Moore
LGB Mental Health & Well Being Project
Bradford Office

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Not Just for Men!

I just wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself to MESMAG readers! I'm Claire Bergman. I started in the post of Counselling Organiser (for Yorkshire MESMAC, the OUR Project and the Brunswick Centre) in February this year. We have a fantastic counselling service at our disposal which aims to provide counselling for client groups that is free at the point of access, fully accessible and confidential.

Yorkshire MESMAC fund counselling within Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and North Yorkshire for any Gay or Bisexual men or men who have sex with men .

Women can also access the counselling service. Counselling is available for any female partners of men who are attracted to men. Lesbian and Bisexual women in the Bradford and Airedale area can also make use of the service. We also provide counselling for young Lesbians accessing youth groups run by Yorkshire MESMAC and for minority ethnic Lesbians attending the Asian and Black Community group in Bradford.

We have a very committed and highly qualified team of forty counsellors who have all undergone training in issues faced by our client group.

for more information or access to the counselling service please call Claire on 07771 931 327 or e-mail counselling@mesmac.co.uk

Yorkshire MESMAC (North Yorkshire)

Residential

Weekend September 4th-6th
at Barden Bunk Barn near Bolton Abbey.

A fantastic, enjoyable and highly successful weekend was had by everyone who attended our recent residential weekend in the North Yorkshire Dales. Fifteen men and three members of staff attended our first ever visit to Barden Bunk Barn residential centre near Bolton Abbey. The centre was brilliant, comfortable and ideal for our purpose in bringing men together in a safe and supportive environment.

The setting and scenery were breathtaking with ample opportunity for nice walks and visits to local historical sites such as Bolton Abbey and Skipton. We visited Skipton and its market on Saturday afternoon allowing men time to explore the historical town at their leisure. All too soon the weekend was drawing to a close and on Sunday morning we came together for a group photo and swapping email addresses before departing. It's amazing how participants keep in touch with one another proving that our residential weekend aptly named "Coming Together" really does work for everyone.

Great company, exceptional food, excellent facilities really made the weekend a pleasure. I would like to thank all those who attended and to Mark and John my co-workers for making the weekend so enjoyable and memorable.

York Pride 16 August 2009 at Tower Gardens York:

"Bigger and better", those were some of the comments made after our successful York Gay Pride. Community and Public Sector stalls lined Tower Gardens. Musicians and artists made the afternoon such a memorable success. Bigger crowds enjoying and sharing this special atmosphere, enabled York and its LGBT community to celebrate in a great afternoon of live entertainment fit for all the family including face painting, mask making and lots more.

The organisers of York Gay Pride would like to thank everyone involved for all their hard work and to City of York Council and others for supporting the event. See you all again in 2010.

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BLAST Inundated with Training Requests!

On Monday 14th September BLAST advertised the 'Not Just Our Daughters' one day training course. Emails were set out to a wide variety of professionals and a positive response was received.

No one could have anticipated that two weeks later BLAST would have gone from holding one course in December, to holding seven courses from mid December to mid January. In this two week period BLAST received over 140 enquiries regarding the 'Not Just Our Daughters' training, all of which have been confirmed.

This illustrates a clear need to address the issues of boys and young men involved in sexual exploitation, and to provide up-to-date relevant training linked to this area of work.

BLAST will be providing this FREE, one day training course to various professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds including the police, children's social care, Education Leeds and other sexual exploitation projects across the country.

The training aims to raise awareness of the sexual exploitation of boys and young men by addressing the following topics:

- Defining sexual exploitation
- Routes in for boys and young men
- Signs of grooming
- West Yorkshire Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation Protocol and Procedures
- How to report intelligence
- Sex and the law
- And much more

If you would like to book on this course or know anyone who would, please pass on Phil's contact details. As long as the demand continues to come in, the course will continue to be delivered on various dates at the Leeds office.

p.mitchell@mesmac.co.uk 0113 2444209
07921 372896

Begin at Yorkshire MESMAC

provides support and advocacy to people living with or affected by HIV in the Wakefield district.

Recent achievements include:

- Begin's active participation in the HIV Stigma index project
- a boat trip for service users
- shopping trips for service users
- a joint bowling trip for HIV positive gay men with the Our project

Work currently in progress includes:

- the development of a comprehensive needs assessment process
- individual support plans for each of our service users
- an awareness campaign for the Wakefield area

Why not join us for lunch

at the Tuesday drop in

13:00- 16:00



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New Steam Sessions

Yorkshire MESMAC is offering free Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia urine screening sessions at the Steam Complex in Armley.

Men just need to provide a urine sample and Yorkshire MESMAC staff will send the samples off to a lab to be tested.

The results come back within 2 weeks and men can choose to be notified by phone or post. The better news is that if either STI is found they can be easily treated with a course of antibiotics.

On top of that, Yorkshire MESMAC is offering free Hepatitis B vaccination courses to protect you from getting Hepatitis B. The course is given over a period of 4 weeks; 1st, 2nd and 4th week. If men want to be protected for longer, a booster vaccination after a year protects men for 5 years. These inoculations are delivered by our Testing Times nursing team.

Nothing goes on the men's medical record and they can ask Yorkshire MESMAC staff any other questions relating to sexual health.

The Steam Complex Sauna sessions are on:

Saturday 17th October 12-4pm

Saturday 7th November 12-4pm

Saturday 21st November 12-4pm

Saturday 5th December 12-4pm

Saturday 19th December 12-4pm

If you can't make it down at the Steam Complex, Yorkshire MESMAC also offers the same service every Thursday 6-8pm along with rapid HIV testing at the Leeds Yorkshire MESMAC office. For any questions or directions please ring 0113 244 4209 and ask for either Pete Boyle or Tom Hunt.

C O N T A C T U S

Leeds Office (Head Office)

PO Box 417, Leeds, LS1 5PN
Tel: 0113 244 4209

BLAST Project

Tel: 0113 2444 209

Bradford

Tel: 01274 395 815

OUR Project

Tel: 01274 740 548

North Yorkshire Offices

Tel: 01904 620 400

Begin at Yorkshire MESMAC

Tel: 01924 211 117

Wakefield

Tel: 01924 211 116

Leeds LGB Switchboard

Tel: 0113 245 3588

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Yorkshire MESMAC
GROUP OF SERVICES
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE