

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CONSULTATION

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The Area Community Planning Group is asked to:

- **Note this paper**
- **Consider the groups role in addressing the issues raised in this paper at a local level.**

1 Background and Summary

- The Scottish Government's Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus (BBV) Framework 2011 – 2015 identifies the need to promote sexual health and wellbeing at local, regional and national levels. The Framework identifies that Sexual Health Strategy Groups should have strong links with BBV Managed Clinical Networks, Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and Community Health Partnerships which will, in turn, feed into the Community Planning process.
- Outcome 5 of the Sexual Health and BBV Framework 2011 – 2015 states there should be:

A society whereby the attitudes of individuals, the public, professionals and the media in Scotland towards sexual health and blood borne viruses are positive, non-stigmatising and supportive.

NHS Boards, the Third Sector, Local Authorities and Scottish Government are accountable for this outcome.

Sexual health includes much more than reducing or preventing sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and improving contraception. Whilst these are all very important factors other significant issues included in sexual health wellbeing are being free from coercion and harm, quality sexual health and relationships education, inclusiveness, focus on inequalities and challenging negative media influences.

2 Challenging culture and commercial messages

The Sexual Health and BBV Framework 2011- 2015 provides examples of the culture and commercial images that need to be challenged;

Challenging cultural and commercial messages which reinforce negative stereotypes of gender identity and sexual orientation is essential to promoting positive sexual health and wellbeing. Gender stereotypes of both men and women perpetuate assumptions of male power and control over a sexual partner, are often founded on misinformation and can inhibit and limit both men and women in developing meaningful relationships and emotional maturity. These stereotypes can be reinforced by both written and electronic media and through, for example, advertising. These rapidly developing influences should be counteracted with positive local and national action.

- *Work to promote the positive and life enhancing aspects of sexual wellbeing and sexual relationships should continue locally, regionally and nationally.*
- *Efforts to promote a positive approach to sexual health and relationships in the media should continue, nationally and locally.*

Some examples of existing work in Argyll and Bute

In Argyll and Bute the Local Authority and NHS Highland encourages secondary schools to use Sexual Health and Relationships programmes that aims to be inclusive, challenge stereotypes and negative impacts media and culture can have. NHS Highland also support Rapecrisis Argyll and Bute to deliver TESSA in secondary schools, the TESSA programme includes sessions on the impact of media and using social media safely.

The Local Authority and NHS Highland encourage primary schools to use Channel 4 Living and Growing Programme. Some of the sessions in the programme address issues such as stereotyping, cultural expectations, respect and being yourself.

NHS Highland have produced a sexual health website for people living in Argyll and Bute. The website aims to be inclusive, informative, educational and helpful for people living in Argyll and Bute.

NHS Highland support national campaigns such as Health Scotland's "Its good to talk about it" and World Aids Day.

NHS Highland work closely with HIV charity, Waverley Care to address a number of sexual health messages including; stereotypes, the importance of inclusiveness and awareness raising about the impact of homophobic behaviour.

3 Evidence to challenge culture and commercial messages

Early evidence indicates the strong impact of the media on young people's approaches to sex and sexual relationships.

Data suggests that healthy sexual attitudes are understood by a significant majority, but significantly fewer act on these healthy attitudes. (Progressive Partnership Ltd. 2008)

Media plays a significant role in Scotland. Some studies estimate that young people (6-17 year olds) spend around five hours per day with one form of media or another. However, with media playing such a significant role in our culture it has a dominating effect across many ages, not just the young.

Sexual imagery pervades many aspects of modern society.

In the absence of other reliable sources of information and advice unbalanced or inaccurate media messages can therefore lead to pressures and confusion over the realities of sex and sexuality particularly for young people. Feedback from the NATSAL survey shows that young females, in particular, view the media as one of their main sources of information. It is therefore important to provide some balance to these messages, including provision of accurate, positive information about sex and sexual health.

4. Some considerations for the Community Planning Group in supporting the issues raised in this paper.

- Support or deliver local awareness raising.
- Support schools and youth clubs address the issues raised in this paper.
- Provide local policy on appropriate messages across a range of topics.
- Consider how the points in this paper might be incorporated into the proposed locality community engagement events.

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