HIV Prevention Project

Draft Work Programme 17/6/95

- The Southern Gay Health Project is a community-based initiative sponsored by Cork Gay Community Development Project Limited. The main sponsor of the project is Southern Health Board.

Aims

- the first objective of the project is to develop, implement and evaluate a long-term, community-based strategy to reduce the risk of male-to-male sexual transmission of HIV in the South West region. This project will be structured and evaluated as a pilot project for similar approaches in other regions.

- the project also aims to act as an on-going health promotion resource covering all the health issues relevant to the gay community in the region.

General Priciples of our approach

Community structure - The Project will be based within the local gay community and views the people, the organisations and the services of the local community as the central resource we will use in our prevention strategy. The project will be managed by a committee representing the local gay community.

Funding - Although the project is community-based and will prioritise its responsibilities to the local gay community, it will rely for its core funding on public sources.

Evaluation - On-going professional evaluation of the project will be arranged by the management committee in consulation with funding agencies.

Accountability - the project will publish an annual report including a full professional audit of all it finanical affairs and an evaluation of its work to date.

Standards - The project aims to maintain the best possible professional standards in all areas of its work and to develop a close working relationship with relevant state services and voluntary groups.

Target groups and Geographical area

The project has condcted an initial assessment of the HIV-related needs and the resources available within the gay community in the Cork area. A panel of local gay men will be established to contine this work providing an ongoing review of needs within the comunity and feed-back on the effectiveness of the projects work.

The needs assessment highlights the difficulty of defining the relevant geographical area for the project. There is considerable mobility within the popuation. Gay social venues in Cork attract people from throughout the South West region and people from the region also socialise in other cities and towns in the South West or outside the region in Dublin, London and holiday resorts particularly in the Mediterranean. Emigration emerges also as a key issue. Many, perhaps a majority, of young gay men in the region will emigrate, either permanently or temporarily. The most frequent emigrant destinations being London and the East coast cities of the USA, particularly New York. Gay tourists visitng the region also emerge as an increasingly important factor since the recent law reform and the growth in comercial social facilities targetted at the gay market.

The project has concluded that the relevant area for its work covers the entire South West region, with a particular focus on the main population centres in the region. Within Ireland the project will need a close working relationship with others working on HIV-related issues, particularly with gay community groups and particularly with groups and services in Dublin. We will also need to establish working links with relevant agencies abroad particularly in Britain and the USA to cater for the needs of emigrants. The project will also seek to develop links with relevant groups in other EU states in order to share experience and contribute to the development of EU policy on HIV prevention in the gay community outside of metropolitan centres.

From the initial needs assessment we have identified four distinct groups whose needs the project will address. The project will develop specific strategies to meet the different needs of each of these groups.

1. HIV-positive gay men living in the Cork region.
2. Gay men who have regular access to gay community facilities - bars, discos, guest-houses etc. This group constitutes the core of the gay community in the region. Emigrants (departing and returning) and gay male tourists/visitors are two sub-sets of this group which may need specific attention.
3. Men who identify themselves as gay but who are not 'out' to the extent of accessing gay community facilities because e.g. they are married or under-age.
4. Men who have sex with men but who do not identify as gay and do not use gay community venues.

1. HIV+ Gay Men:

The projects key input here will be the establishment of a self-help support group for HIV+ gay men in Cork. Initially this will be facilitated by a professional counsellor. The project will subsidise the initial cost of counsellors fees, venue hire and other expenses as well as help to establish ground-rules regarding confidentiality etc and help overcome any other obstacle that might inhibt the establishment of the group. Once established the group should be self-supporting. The project will work with the group on its on-going funding requirements and will help it to initiate similar groups in other regional population centres such as Limerick and Waterford.

2. Gay Community -

a) our main preventative approach in the gay community proper will be 'peer-education'. To this end we will select and train a core group of individuals who are seen to have broad acceptability within the community and who can effectively bring information into the many private and secretive areas of the community. Our key aim should be to provide the on-going training, resources and support that will allow these individuals to be effective.

b) other steps the project will take within the gay community:

- to provide a specific information and support service for emigrants, particularly young people contemplating emigration. This service will be developed in conjunction with the existing telephone information service provided by Gay Information Cork,
- to ensure that condoms, lubricant and simple information on HIV prevention are easily and cheaply available at all gay comunity venues.
- to work in co-operation with commercial facilities aimed at the gay market to provide appropriate information to gay tourists visiting the region,
- to ensure that training on HIV prevention is provided for all individuals working in gay community organisations.
- to network with other relevant groups through the national 'Gay Mens Health Network'

3. Men who identify themselves as gay but who are not 'out' to the extent of accessing gay community facilities because e.g. they are married or under-age.

The main contact point for this group will be through the telephone information service provided by Gay Information Cork. The Project will support the advertising and

promotion of this service and will seek to emphasise its role in providing HIV/AIDS information. The project will support appropriate training for the line volunteers. The project will support the provision of one-to-one counselling where appropriate. The project will also support development of self-help or support groups (eg for married gay men) if it becomes possible to establish these.

4. Men who have sex with men but who do not identify as gay and do not use gay community venues.

It is very dificult to reach this group with HIV prevention information and virtually impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of any information that is given. Their sexual behaviour typically involves casual and anonymous sexual encounters often with prostitutes. It is an ultra-secretive area on the margins of legality. The long-term approach of the project will be to recruit a number of gay men whose sexual lives over-lap with this sub-culture. Training on HIV prevention will be provided and on-going support to allow these individuals act as 'outreach' workers providing information and ensuring there is easy access to condoms among this group. Initially this outreach work will be undertaken by the project staff themselves in order to evaluate in detail how best to approach the establishment of an on-going programme.

Work Programme

The project began at the start of May 1995 after receipt of an an initial Southern Health Board grant on . The first stage of the project involved

a) the recruitment of staff,
b) the establishment of management, administrative and accounting procedures,
c) the conduct of an initial audit of needs and resources exising in the community,
c) the development of this work-plan for the project.

The work plan is divided into three phases beginnning on 1st of July 1995 and ending on 30th of April 1996 the date set for the first annual report of the project.

Phase 1. July/Aug 1995

Objectives and actions:

1. Objective - To ensure that the workers on the project have the neccessary information amd training to deal with the all areas of the projects's work.

Action - Contact relevant agencies in Ireland and Britain to source and implement an appropriate pacakage of training which will fully prepare the project workers for all areas of their work and, in particular, will allow them to act as a training resource for the people working in gay community services in the region. Contact agencies in Ireland Britain and elsewhere to source and assemble the most up-to-date and appropriate information and health promotion tools - leaflets, books, newletters, videos etc - as a resource for the project. This work will involve two short visits to London by project staff in June and in August.

2. Objective - To take the initial steps towards building a co-operative working relationship with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in the region.

Action: a short summary of the projects aims and work plan will be produced and sent to all relevant agencies in the region. Where appropriate representatives of these agencies will be invited to visit the project for an initial briefing and exchange of views. An on-going system for exchange of information will be established with agencies working directly on HIV/AIDS issues.

3. Objective - To network the projct with other HIV/AIDS groups woking on HIV prevention in the gay community in Ireland.

Action - This objective can best be achieved by taking an active part in the work of the Gay Mens Health Network. Project workers will attend all network meetings and will be encouraged to undertake network-related tasks as part of their project work.

4. Objective - To establish an on-going external, professional evaluation mechanism for the project.

Action - the project has set aside a budget provision for this work and will approach academic departments and professional research companies to identify a person with the appropriate skills and experience to undertake this task.

5. Objective -To establish the project within the gay community by developing and implementing a programme of free and/or low cost condom distribution accompanied by HIV prevention information produced by the group. This will be an on-going part of the projects work and aims to ensure that condoms are readily available in all gay community at an affordable price.

Action - Design, printing and production of a 'condom pack' including condoms and HIV information which can be distributed free by projects workers and be sold at a minimal cost through vending machines or across-the-counter in gay venues. These packls will initally be distributed by the project workers to everyone attending the local gay disco.

Phase 2 Sept/Dec 1995

Objectives and actions:

1. Objective - To develop an initial outreach to local 'cruising' areas to assess the problems involved in accessing men involved in prostitution and in homosexual encounters outside the network of the gay community.

Action- this phase of the outreach will be operated by the project workers themselves who will visit these areas regularly for pre-set periods and approach people to talk with them and when appropriate to give them information packs and condoms.

2. Objective - To establish the self-help group for HIV positive gay men in the Cork area.

Action - the project will identify a professional counsellor willing to co-ordinate the meetings and will provide a venue and appropriate advertising - mainly by word of mouth and through the telephone information service of Gay Information Cork.

3. Objective - To recruit and train a group of local gay men to act as peer educators among the local gay community.

Action- the project workers will identify individuals who would be appropriate for this role and will approach them on a one-to-one basis to attand an initial, week-end, residential training session. As well as providing information and training this session will focus on building a group identity and allowing individuals attanding the space to decide whether they wish to undertake this role in the long term. Once the group has been established the project's role will be to provide the training, resources and support that will allow the individuals involved to carry out their roles and will allow the peer-education group to cohere as an on-oing support for them.

4. Objective - To develop the telephone information service of Gay Information Cork as an outreach to men who identify as gay but who are not sufficiently 'out' attand gay community venues.

Action - the project will provide on-going funding for the advertising costs of the information line. The wording, design and location of this advertising will be designed to include the HIV outreach function along with the lines general information role. The project will provide on-going training and support on HIV/AIDS for line volunteers.

Jan 1995 - Review

The progress of the project will be fully reviewed in conjunction with the evaluator and the funding agencies during January 1995. The details of the work plan for phase 3 will be decided by the outcome of that review process.

Phase 3. Feb/May 96

The work plan envisaged for Phase 3, subject to the outcome of the review process, is:

1. The on-going development of the peer-education project and its extension to other parts of the region.

2. The development of the outreach project to the 'cruising' areas,

3. On-going support for the self-help group for HIV positive gay men and the establishment of similar groups in other population centres

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