



Press Release: Wednesday 26th November 2014

Embargo: Midnight

GLEN calls for rethink in approaches to HIV prevention for gay and bisexual men

At the Oireachtas Health Committee on Thursday 27th November GLEN will call for a new strategic approach to HIV in Ireland which has the goal of zero new cases of HIV and zero discrimination against people living with HIV.

Figures released by the HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) show that **there were 205 newly diagnosed cases of HIV in Ireland in the first 6 months of 2014. 94 of the new diagnoses were gay and bisexual men, up from 82 cases for the same period in 2013.**

"It is clear from the latest figures that HIV is an issue of critical concern for gay and bisexual men. The figures for 2014 show that gay and bisexual men are the group most likely to acquire HIV in Ireland" said **Tiernan Brady, Director of Gay HIV Strategies (GHS) with GLEN.**

Gay and bisexual men under the age of 35 now make up 6 out of every 10 new cases of HIV. Between 2005 and 2013 there has been a four-fold increase in the number of new diagnoses among those aged between 25-34 years. The median age of HIV diagnosis for gay and bisexual men has fallen to 32 years from 37 years in 2005.

"There is a need for a rethink in our approaches. **Our strategic goals must be zero new cases of HIV and zero discrimination against people living with HIV**" continued Brady.

"The age group of people most at risk of HIV is getting younger. There is a real and urgent need to educate a new generation of young people and young gay and bisexual men in particular about HIV" said Brady.

"A new program with clear goals and targets, properly resourced, will need to increase the number and variety of testing opportunities targeting gay and bisexual men. Early diagnosis can significantly improve a person's long term health outcomes. It can also be a significant factor in reducing onward transmission of HIV to others as the majority of new cases are passed on by people who do not know they are HIV positive" continued Brady.

"People living with HIV continue to face discrimination in their lives. **It is essential that we develop and implement new national campaigns to educate the general public, employers and service providers with the aim of achieving zero stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV**" Brady concluded.

The Oireachtas committee will also be addressed on these issues by Deirdre Seery of the Cork Sexual Health Centre who will talk about rapid HIV testing pilot schemes; Peter Foley of letsgetchecked.ie who will talk about HIV home testing; and Jimmy Goulding of Positive Now who will speak about the discrimination faced by people living with HIV.

ENDS

For Further Information, contact:

Tiernan Brady Policy Director (087) 8505972

Gay HIV Strategies
GLEN – Gay and Lesbian Equality Network,
2 Exchange Street Upper, Dublin 8
E: info@glen.ie; W: www.glen.ie T: +353 1 6728650

Editors Note:

Gay HIV Strategies is an initiative of GLEN – the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network – that focuses on developing effective HIV prevention and sexual health promotion strategies targeting men who have sex with men.

The Committee hearing is at 9.30 am on Thursday 27th November in Committee Room 2 of Leinster House

For further information from the HPSC on the 2014 figures the website link is <http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/HIVSTIs/HIVandAIDS/SurveillanceReports/>