



Sexual Health

1. Introduction

Rates of diagnosed sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have been increasing in the UK during the last decade, with the highest rates found in London.

The impact of different STIs varies greatly with some – e.g. syphilis and gonorrhoea – able to be cleared by relatively short-term and low cost treatment, whereas HIV infection is a life-long condition. The Health Protection Agency has estimated that the current average direct lifetime treatment cost for an HIV-positive person was between £280,000 and £360,000¹, with cost-effectiveness studies from the USA and France indicating that where the prevalence rate of HIV is higher than one person in 1,000, HIV testing is cost-effective.

Poor sexual health is not equally distributed throughout the population. The highest burden is borne by women, men who have sex with men (MSM), teenagers, young adults and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. HIV infection also has an unequal impact on some ethnic and other minority groups. In Hounslow, MSM in particular have been badly affected by HIV/AIDS, with high rates of infection in this population between the ages of 35–44.

2. The Local Picture²

2.1 Contraception

The rate of women prescribed Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) by their GP in Hounslow in 2009 was 25.7 per 1,000 women, aged between 15–44 years. This rate is within the lowest 20% of PCTs and is above the London average (25.0 per 1,000 women) but below the England average (46.9 per 1,000 women). ([Table 1](#))

2.2 Abortions

In 2010, Hounslow's overall rate of abortion was significantly higher than both the England and London averages. Hounslow's age-standardised abortion rate of 29.5 per 1,000 females aged 15–44 was two-thirds higher than the England average of 17.6 per 1,000 females and above the London average of 25.7 per 1,000 females ([Table 1](#))

Rates of repeat abortions in women under the age of 25 are also higher than the England average, but lower than that of London. In 2009, 28.9% of abortions provided to women under 25 were repeat abortions. The corresponding figure for England was 25.1% and London was 32.3%. ([Table 1](#))

2.3 Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) & HIV

In Hounslow, the rates of diagnosed gonorrhoea and syphilis are higher than the England average, but below the rates for London as a whole. In 2009: ([Table 1](#))

- The rate of gonorrhoea diagnosed in genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics in Hounslow was 47.2 per 100,000 population, compared with 29.7 per 100,000

¹ Health Protection Agency, HIV in the United Kingdom: 2009 Report

² Data from SWPHO Sexual health balanced scorecard http://www.apho.org.uk/default.aspx?QN=SBS_PAGE02



population for England as a whole. Hounslow's rate of diagnosed gonorrhoea is among the highest 20% of PCT areas in England.

- The rate of syphilis diagnosed in GUM clinics in Hounslow was 9.0 per 100,000 population, significantly higher than the England average of 5.5 per 100,000 population.
- The prevalence of diagnosed HIV in Hounslow was 3.5 per 1,000 population aged between 15–59 years – among the highest 20% of PCTs in England and nearly double the England rate of 1.8 per 1,000 population. However, while the prevalence of diagnosed HIV seems to be on an upward trend for both England and London as a whole, it appears to have plateaued in Hounslow. ([Figure 2](#))
- In 2009, 549 people diagnosed with HIV were living in Hounslow. ([Table 1](#))

The Health Protection Agency³ note that sexually transmitted infections continue to increase, with new diagnoses rising by 2%. Mirroring this trend, there has been a continued increase in infections amongst MSM, with up to 30% having never been tested⁴; while current rates of undiagnosed HIV in MSM are estimated at around 30%.

Late diagnosis of HIV is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, increased treatment costs to the NHS and rates of onward transmission of HIV from those unaware of their HIV status is three times the rate of those diagnosed. In 2008 43% of MSM received a late diagnosis.⁵

In 2009, there were 53 new diagnoses of HIV amongst people living in Hounslow. Of these 13 (24.5%) were very late diagnoses with a CD4 cell count of <200 at time of diagnosis. ([Table 1](#)) With an estimated average future health and social care cost of around £300,000 per infection, the 53 new diagnoses represents a future cost of c.£15.9m. A growing proportion of infections, now over half the total, have been acquired heterosexually.

About one-third of HIV patients obtain their health care and treatment at West Middlesex University Hospital, another third travel to Central London specialist HIV centres, and the remainder to a range of other hospitals outside the Borough, notably Ealing Hospital.

2.4 Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic attendances

The main provider of GUM clinic services in Hounslow is West Middlesex University Hospital (WMUH). In 2009, they offered appointments within 2 days to 98.9% of patients. While provision was high, uptake was slightly lower. In the same year, 87.5% of GUM patients were seen within two working days – slightly lower than the England average of 88.2%.

The proportion of patients waiting over 10 working days before being seen was slightly higher in Hounslow (1.9%) than across England as a whole (1.3%). The remaining 10.6% of patients did not attend the clinic offering the appointment. These individuals either sought help elsewhere or potentially remain untreated.

³ Health Protection Agency Press Release, June 2007, in North West London HPU Newsletter

⁴ Health Protection Agency: Time to test for HIV: Expanded healthcare and community HIV testing in England, Interim Report 2010

⁵ Health Protection Agency, HIV in the United Kingdom: 2009 Report



2.5 Community based services

Around 38% of MSM have never visited a sexual health clinic, rising to 40% of those with 30 or more partners per year, and most do not disclose their sexuality to their GP⁶. The importance of alternative access to services for MSM, including peer and community HIV prevention and sexual health promotion models is key in Hounslow.

Hounslow has benefited from the HIV prevention and sexual health promotion work of the West London Gay Men's Project for over 10 years, providing an alternative access route for MSM in the Borough, as well as key evidence of effectiveness, demographics and profiles. The Project's rapid HIV testing service provided the highest positivity rate of any service in England under a Department of Health pilot, helping reduce undiagnosed HIV infection and giving peer health trainers a critical opportunity to effect behaviour change for those who tested negative. It offers innovative one-to-one behaviour change interventions, mentoring, outreach, information and support for MSM and other hard to reach groups, as well as maintaining a database of over 4,000 MSM in West London.

3. Strategic Leadership and Collaboration

In October 2010, NHS Hounslow and WMUH launched the provision of an Integrated Sexual Health and Reproductive Services in Hounslow. The integrated service provides a full range of contraceptive choices, including condom distribution, with a focus on improving uptake of Long Acting Reversible Contraception and access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception, and reducing the rate of repeat abortions. The service also offers open access to STI and HIV testing in a range of locations, with the main centre for STI and HIV testing located in Isleworth at WMUH. Routine STI testing is also available at Community Sexual Health Clinics in Hounslow, Feltham and Chiswick.

The service works alongside the recommendations for good practice as defined by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) and the Recommended Standards for Sexual Health Services, (MedFASH). The service follows guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) on both LARC and Contraceptive Services.

The Integrated Sexual Health Clinics in Hounslow are renowned for both their quality of service and respect for clients, who present with a range of sexual health issues. The WMUH clinic in Isleworth has held the coveted Charter Mark award for excellence in public service for the past decade.

The Sexual Health Strategy Group is a partnership consisting of senior representatives and clinicians from Local Authority, NHS Hounslow, Great West Commissioning and West Middlesex University Hospital (WMUH) sexual health services. This group will form the basis of a future Sexual Health Board, in line with the Government's White Paper, Healthy Lives Healthy People.

4. Priorities

The priorities for adult sexual health in Hounslow for 2011/12 are to:

⁶ Consuming Passions: Findings from the UK Gay Men's Sex Survey 2005; Sigma Research



- Improve the way that sexual health services are commissioned, to improve access and the overall sexual health of the population;
- Continue to work with the London Sexual Health Programme and North West London Cluster to drive up standards of services provided to women undergoing termination of pregnancy;
- Ensure that the Sexual Health Strategy Group and future Sexual Health Board takes a holistic approach to all-age sexual health, including comprehensive and effective education and behaviour change appropriate for our diverse communities;
- Develop a comprehensive understanding of sexual health needs, especially variations of needs and effectiveness of interventions across diverse communities; and
- Ensure HIV prevention and sexual health promotion work meets the requirement of high-need groups in Hounslow, and maintains specialist alternative community services for groups who do not access traditional NHS services.

5. Summary of Need

The table summarising the needs in this area has not been completed as it is not considered appropriate to classify Adult Sexual Health needs.