

PLANS TO IMPROVE SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES AND CUT INFECTIONS

Proposals to improve people's sexual health and sexual health services will be unveiled by the Welsh Assembly Government today [Monday, 15 June].

The plan also aims to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, particularly amongst teenage girls, reduce the rates of HIV and sexually transmitted infections and to create a culture that supports open and responsible discussion of sexual health.

Since the Assembly Government's previous strategy was published in 2001, a number of successful national sexual health awareness campaigns have been funded which have resulted in a downward trend in the diagnosis of new infections of gonorrhoea since 2004 and of chlamydia since 2005.

In addition, the HPV vaccine has been introduced and family planning services and sexual health clinics have already been integrated to improve access to advice, support and treatment.

However, it is recognised that further work is required.

The proposed draft working document 'Sexual Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wales 2009-2014', aims to increase awareness of the importance and understanding of sexual health and relationships, improve access to sexual health services, reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, reduce the number of new diagnoses of sexually transmitted infections, HIV and Hepatitis B and improve the health and social care for people living with HIV.

Features of the plan include:

- The creation of a National Sexual Health Advisory Board;
- New guidance for schools on the delivery of sex and relationship education;
- A campaign targeting further and higher education students to raise awareness of binge drinking and unprotected sex;
- The development of a service specification and care pathways for people with HIV/AIDS.

Edwina Hart said: "This document emphasises our commitment to improving sexual health services and reducing the rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

"A key component of this new document is the importance of educating people of the need for a greater awareness of good sexual health and the dangers associated with unprotected sex. This will complement the work

already underway in schools to help young people understand the physical and emotional aspects of sexual relations and be aware of the personal and sexual-health services available to them.

“I would encourage everyone to have their say by responding to the consultation. “

The 16 week consultation will start today and finish 5 October 2009

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