

Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Strategy Summary

for Dumfries and Galloway



2007 - 2010

community

planning

Implementing a
shared vision with
communities in
Dumfries and Galloway

Introduction

Sexual health is a basic human need. It is central to the joy and development of some of the most important and lasting relationships in our lives. Poor sexual health can have a detrimental effect on our physical and mental wellbeing.

Although the effects of poor sexual health are important, sexual health is not just about negative physical outcomes such as unintended or unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and the effects of abusive or coercive relationships.

Positive sexual health is about every person having the choice and skills to develop positive emotional and physical relationships which are enjoyable, fulfilling mutually satisfying and definitely fun.

What is sexual health?

Sexual health is about all the aspects of health and wellbeing that are associated with sexual thoughts, feelings, behaviours, physical relationships and the impacts they have on people.

“Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing related to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sex experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled” (World Health Organisation).



Sexual health is one of the few aspects of health to affect most of the population and it is relevant throughout most of their lives.

Our sexual health is also about who we are and how we express ourselves as individuals. It is about self respect, our respect for others, important relationships, fun, joy, imagination and creativity.

The purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a clear direction and focus for sexual health work throughout Dumfries and Galloway. It provides a framework for the development of sexual health and relationships, building on existing partnerships and best practice in the region.

The Strategy sets out a number of key principles and provides a clear evidence based foundation to underpin and inform the development of an inclusive, co-ordinated, comprehensive and effective approach to sexual health improvement for the population of Dumfries and Galloway. By improving people's sexual health, their overall wellbeing will improve.

SEXUAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY



Who is the Strategy for?

This Strategy is aimed at everyone. All people have the right to positive sexual health.

However, when it comes to poor sexual health, there can be many inequalities. Some vulnerable groups in society can be more affected than others. These groups are not mutually exclusive and people may be in more than one group.

In Dumfries and Galloway the groups of people who may be particularly hard to reach and/or vulnerable include –

- Men who have sex with men (MSM);
- Lesbian and bisexual women;
- Transgender people;
- Sex workers, male and female;
- People in minority ethnic groups;
- Individuals in the custodial system;
- Looked after and accommodated children;
- People with alcohol or drug problems (or both);
- People with mental health problems;
- People with physical disabilities;
- Survivors of sexual abuse;
- Young people;
- Older people;
- People with learning disabilities;
- Homeless people;
- People living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS); and
- Families and children of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The values and principles

- The people of Dumfries and Galloway have the right to non-judgemental, sensitive, appropriate and confidential services, support and education.
- Religious and cultural beliefs should be taken into account when providing such services.
- People have the right to be included in relationships that are consensual and informed.
- An awareness of and respect for diversity in sexual relationships (that are not abusive and are free from coercion) must be developed.
- There must be equal access to high quality information, appropriate to individual needs.
- People have the right to say “NO”. Power imbalances in relationships must be reduced and equality must be promoted.
- All people have the right not to be harassed, coerced, pressured or abused by the activities or attitudes of others.
- Lifelong sexuality is acknowledged – in the context of emotional and intellectual wellbeing.
- Everyone has the responsibility to ensure all these rights are put into practice to develop a positive and affirming overall culture for sexual health and relationships in an environment in which this is seen as a basic human right.

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How will we achieve the Strategy?

Sexual health improvement cannot be tackled in isolation. Problems in sexual health can affect all aspects of our lives, including our physical health, mental health, emotional health, social and spiritual health. Problems in any of these areas can also impact detrimentally upon a person's sexual health.

In order for this Strategy to succeed, all partner organisations must work together. It is also essential that service users and the public are involved through consultation and community planning mechanisms to help shape sexual health improvement for the future.

Alongside the development of this Strategy has been the development of the Dumfries

and Galloway Sexual Health Action Plan 2006. This identifies the actions needed to address the Strategy's aims and objectives. It details the work required for each recommendation including timescale, costs and priorities. It shows which organisation (or organisations) has responsibility for the work. The work required is presented in detail. It will guide the way in which sexual health will be addressed in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Sexual Health Strategy Group will oversee the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. The Group will work in partnership with existing groups e.g. Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, and short term action groups will be developed when necessary.



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Aims

The main aims of the Dumfries and Galloway Sexual Health Strategy are to:

- improve the sexual health of the population of Dumfries and Galloway;
- have a positive influence on the cultural and social factors that affect sexual health;
- build on the aims and objectives of the Dumfries and Galloway Sexual Health Strategy and Action Agenda 2003;
- ensure that the recommendations of the National Sexual Health Strategy are addressed where relevant to Dumfries and Galloway;
- improve the quality, range, consistency and accessibility of sexual health services and ensure they are safe, local and appropriate; and
- eliminate discrimination that has an impact on good sexual health.

Objectives

Within the wider aim of working towards sexual health for all, the specific objectives of the Strategy include:

- promoting positive and mutually-satisfying stable relationships for everyone, regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, religion, gender and sexual orientation;
- providing effective sex and relationships education for everyone;
- reducing the inequalities that are currently apparent in sexual health;
- promoting respect for self and others;
- reducing the incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections;
- promote delaying the age of starting sexual activity;
- promoting the protection of children;
- reducing the numbers of unplanned and or unwanted pregnancies; and
- addressing the needs of vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

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Outcomes

Here are some examples of the key overall sexual health outcomes:

- Positive sexual health is improved for the population of Dumfries and Galloway;
- All services and partnerships work towards developing a positive sexual health culture;
- All people in Dumfries and Galloway will be educated in sexual health and relationship issues;
- All people in Dumfries and Galloway will have access to high quality clinical services; and
- The sexual health of the people who are in hard to reach and/or vulnerable groups will be improved.

Are you worried about your sexual Health?

It is not unusual for people to worry about their sexual health. They may worry about many different issues, such as :

- What is the right contraception for me?
- Am I pregnant?
- Why am I not falling pregnant?
- Is that part of me the same as everyone else's?
- Should I feel like this?
- Have I got an infection?
- What are sexually transmitted infections?
- Why is that not working?
- Am I going through the menopause?
- I think I have found a lump!
- What is safer sex?
- Am I normal?

There are many places in Dumfries and Galloway that you can access accurate information and/or receive confidential advice. You can directly contact/access all of the following services yourself:

- Your GP or Practice Nurse;
- Your School Nurse;
- The Department of Family Planning and Sexual Health;
- The Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinic;
- The Community Pharmacy;
- Guidance teacher;
- Youth worker or Youth Enquiry Service;
- Accident and Emergency;
- The Police Family Protection Unit;
- Websites – www.c4urself.org.uk or www.think4urself.com
- Your Community Nurse or Health Visitor;
- C2U clinics;
- Voluntary sector groups e.g. Couple Counselling, South West Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre, LGBT Youth, Age Concern;
- NHS 24; and
- The Health Information Centre

If necessary you may be referred on to a more specialised service such as:

- Obstetrics or Gynaecology;
- Andrology or Urology,
- Psychology;
- Infectious Diseases Services.

For further information on how to contact the above services, please go to www.nhs.uk/sexualhealth/

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