



4th July 2006

LACK OF FUNDING AND INADEQUATE CAPACITY OF GUM CLINICS CONTRIBUTE TO RISE OF STIs

In response to figures released by the Health Protection Agency today, Dr Simon Barton, President, **British Association For Sexual Health & HIV (BASHH)** commented:

“The increase in the number of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other conditions diagnosed in genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics is a clear indication of the urgent need for the additional resources allocated by the government to improve capacity in sexual health services to be made available to front line services.”

“The last few years have seen an increase in public awareness about STIs which has resulted in more people coming to clinics to get tested and treated. Our workload has therefore increased by 9% as revealed today, resulting in an increase in the demand for and pressure on resources for GUM clinics.”

“BASHH has consistently stressed that improving sexual health services and tackling waiting times is an essential part of disease prevention as failure to treat infections promptly – or at all in some cases – means that untreated patients who remain sexually active, can further increase the transmission of STIs.”

“Although sexual health and access to GUM clinics was made one of the top six national priorities for the NHS in 2006/7¹, we are still seeing inappropriate allocation of funds for these services at the PCT level. BASHH clinicians at the frontline of sexual health services, particularly GUM clinics, continue to express concerns over the extreme pressure they work under. In particular, inadequate resource and lack of capacity mean they face difficulties in meeting both the national targets for access and their local population’s needs.”

BASHH has developed new treatment guidelines for clinicians which we believe have gone some way in helping to contain the public health crisis. But we need to ensure that the Government funding allocated to support the ‘Choosing Health’ White Paper reaches GUM clinics. These clinics often serve as the first port of call for many people with concerns, symptoms or signs of STIs and HIV and we need to make sure people can get seen in the service of their choice.

¹ The NHS in England: The Operating framework for 2006/7
http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/PressReleases/PressReleasesNotices/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4127249&chk=%2BnBex5

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