

Rollout of the National Chlamydia Screening Programme and publication of the pilot reports

The Department of Health has announced 10 locations to take forward the first phase of a national chlamydia screening programme as proposed by the National Strategy for Sexual Health and HIV. The sites will share £1.5 million additional funding to help set up the screening programme which will primarily target women aged 16 - 24 who access sexual health services. Further information including the names of the 10 sites can be found on the press release on the Department of Health's website, <http://tap.ukwebhost.eds.com/doh/intpress.nsf/page/2002-0351>

Evaluation results from pilots carried out at Portsmouth and Wirral found that testing was a success with both patients and healthcare professionals and reached a high proportion of the target group. 75% of those offered screening accepted and approximately 1 in 10 were found to be infected. A summary report of the pilots has been published on the Department of Health's website, <http://www.doh.gov.uk/sexualhealthandhiv> . Copies of this can also be obtained from: Chlamydia Screening Programme, Room 580D Skipton House, 80 London Rd, London, SE1 6LH.

Recent data issued by the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS) indicated that in 2001, genital chlamydial infection became the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) seen in GUM clinics with a total of 71 055 diagnoses. New diagnoses of Chlamydia doubled between 1995 and 2000. Although easily treated with antibiotics, many cases are never diagnosed. Young women, particularly those under 21, are at greatest risk of infection and the long term complications of untreated chlamydia are more serious for women. In women, untreated chlamydia can lead to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, ectopic pregnancy and infertility, at a cost to the NHS of at least £50million each year.