

A Picture of Health

In focus this month: **LGBT**

In Public Health we look at the way people in Tameside live as a whole population. This helps us understand what the main health and wellbeing challenges are for people living here, so we can look for ways to improve levels of health. We'll be sharing facts and figures about health in Tameside with you every month, to put you in the picture. We'll also be giving you information on how you can help yourself and the people around you to live well.

1 February marks Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History month. It's now 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales. Thanks to the courage of many LGBT people throughout history, times and attitudes are changing for the better. There's much to celebrate, and yet much more remains to be done in the fight for equality. Health is just one of the areas in which LGBT people experience disadvantage. This month's picture of health is about how we can try to change that. To learn more about the story of our local LGBT community's fight for rights, visit Manchester's People's History Museum 'Outing the Past Manchester' exhibition this February.



2 From the LGB societies of years gone by to the latest LGBTQI acronym, the language used to unite the community has grown. It represents a richness in diversity that can't (and won't!) put people into pigeonholes. The simplistic view of gay or straight has been challenged by individuals who refuse to be defined by their sex they were born to, who choose their gender in accordance with what feels right, and whose sexuality isn't tethered to either. If you've yet to understand the difference between sex, gender and sexuality read on for enlightenment!



3 In a survey 1 in 4 LGBT people indicated that they were not out with any medical professional, and 1 in 5 delayed accessing help because of it. Being LGBT means there are additional and specific health concerns to be conscious of, so it's really important to be open about your identity and lifestyle with your GP if you are to get the best healthcare. GPs, Optometrists, Pharmacists and Dentists in Tameside are being encouraged to sign up to 'Pride in Practice', an accreditation awarded to practices that demonstrate a commitment to empathy, understanding, and meeting the needs of LGBT patients. If you would like to share your experience of being an LGBT person accessing primary care, whether it was a positive or negative experience, click the link.



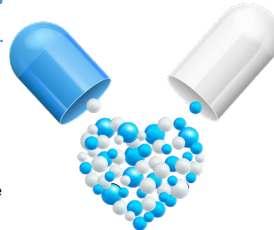
4 Many young LGBT people feel scared, unsure, depressed, or worried about coming out. They may face bullying in school, or even at home if family members struggle to accept their identity. Tameside LGBT Youth Group is a group for young LGBT people to meet each other, make friends, talk about things important to them, and have fun. Services offered include Peer Support, guidance on questioning gender or sexuality, tips for how to come out, advice on what to do if you're feeling stressed/depressed, trans specific information, how to keep safe online and much more.



5 Nowadays HIV is a treatable, long-term condition. The 'HIV Has Changed' campaign aims to encourage people to get tested regularly in order to diagnose the virus as early as possible. With the right treatment it can be kept at an undetectable and untransmittable level. There are several ways you can find your HIV status, it doesn't have to include a trip to a GP or clinic. Click the link to obtain a free home test.



6 HIV has changed. We know so much more about it these days, and researchers continue to find more ways to stop the virus in its tracks. The NHS is currently trialling 'Pre Exposure Prophylaxis', known as Prep. This drug works to prevent HIV taking hold when an HIV negative person is exposed to the virus. Prep isn't freely available as a routine service yet, so it's important to remember that a condom is still the best first line of defence against HIV and STIs. Want to know more about prep? Click the link.



7 Parents of LGBT children often need to support their child through physical, mental and emotional health issues they themselves have never experienced. They may also have worries and questions of their own on learning that their child wishes to live their life differently to their existing expectations. Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbian and Gay UK (Pflag) offer help and advice to ensure friends and family understand what they can do to positively support each other at what can be a confusing time.



8 According to a survey by Stonewall, Lesbian and Bisexual women are more likely to drink excess alcohol than heterosexual women. With that comes a number of health concerns, ranging from weight gain and weight related problems such as Type 2 Diabetes, to increased blood pressure and the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. In addition there are the safety aspects of a night on the town to think about, as alcohol lowers inhibitions and makes it more likely that you'll take risks. Girls on Pop is a guide to safer drinking for Lesbian and Bisexual women, including some interesting suggestions for nights out without the booze.



9 LGBT people are more likely to experience mental health problems than the wider population. Experience of bullying, rejection, stigma and discrimination may lead to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and feelings of isolation. Mind offer mental health support for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or questioning (LGBTQI). The LGBT Foundation also provides a talking therapies service to the LGBT communities of the North West, including access to LGBT affirmative therapy, counselling with an LGBT specialist therapist and FREE sessions to individuals and couples. Click the logo to find out more from each organisation.



10 Many of the issues in later life are similar whether you're heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but some matters may need special consideration. Older people, in particular those who have lived through times when hiding their identity was a way to feel safe, may feel a pressure to return to the closet when faced with entering a health or social care service. A new resource guide called 'Safe to be me', is available for anyone working or volunteering in health and social care settings to understand and meet the needs of older LGBT people. It includes practical advice on helping older LGBT people feel safe and accepted for who they are.



11 A proportion of those living with dementia hail from the LGBT community. Experience of the disease is hugely influenced by the life experience of the individual. People with dementia who are also LGBT may need to have additional needs met, and considerations made of the times they grew up in. For those who are 65 years plus, the landscape has changed. An LGBT person living with dementia may find the changes confusing, and may feel unsafe if they forget how far things have come. This guide will help anyone who is caring for an LGBT person with dementia.



12 Trans and non-Binary people who retain some physical components of the sex they were born to may still be at risk of certain cancers. For example of breast tissue, and of the cervix in the case of trans men, and of the prostate in the case of trans women. For this reason it's really important to attend regular screening tests to detect problems early. Depending on your gender identity, and how you are registered with your GP, you may or may not be called for screenings automatically. This leaflet explains when you can expect to be called, and when you may need to ask.

