



APPG welcomes Government move to improve sex and relationship education

The APPG on AIDS welcomes the Government decision to make Personal Social Health Education a statutory part of the school curriculum.

Sex education will now be taught alongside relationship education, not just in a biological context. An independent government review found that statutory status for PSHE would raise standards of teaching about sex and relationships in schools and address disparities in provision.

'Jim Knight has made a bold and very important decision' said David Borrow MP, new Chair of the APPG on AIDS. 'Statutory status will mean that PSHE, of which sex and relationship education is a part, will be delivered by trained teachers, who are given the time in the curricu-

lum to teach. You wouldn't expect someone to teach maths with no training, no more should you expect anyone to be able to teach about HIV with no training.' Information about HIV is likely to be taught only at secondary school level.

There are still many common misunderstandings surrounding HIV; in fact knowledge has worsened in the last seven years. A NAT/Ipsos MORI poll (2008) found that 21% of adults did NOT know that sex without a condom could be dangerous. This is compared with only 9% in 2000. 'We should be getting better in our understanding of how to avoid HIV not worse!' said Veronica Oakeshott, policy adviser to The APPG on

AIDS. 'Young people can't be expected to know about HIV instinctively or indeed to get reliable information from the films and TV programmes they see - school is a good place to teach it.'

The new PSHE curriculum is yet to be determined, but the APPG is calling to ensure it addresses HIV and HIV-related stigma appropriately for different age levels.



Statutory status for PSHE should empower teachers to deliver high quality sex and relationships education and give young people the awareness they need to protect themselves.

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In tough economic times there will always be a temptation to cut back on international aid, but DFID must stick to its HIV commitments writes *Veronica Oakeshott, policy adviser to the APPG*. It should also keep lobbying to ensure other donor countries do the same.

Equally, the Department of Health needs to focus on the unglamorous job of tackling HIV in the UK, where over 7000 new infections are re-

corded each year and thousands go undetected.

HIV infection, especially in high prevalence countries, grows exponentially - the more people who have it, the more there are to pass it on. This is especially true when people don't know they're infected. In contrast, testing and treatment create a *virtuous* circle. New research shows that when an HIV+ person is

on the right treatment and both parties are otherwise healthy, the levels of virus in the body can be lowered such that the odds of transmitting the disease can be as low as one in 20,000.

So if we're serious about tackling HIV, whilst the world tightens its belt, the worst approach is save now and spend later. Time matters. What we spend now, we will save later.

comment



UNAIDS came to brief the APPG on this report in November

Latest UNAIDS global report: 33 million people with HIV

With 33 million people infected with HIV, two-thirds of whom in Africa, the UNAIDS' biennial report on the Global Epidemic concludes that there must be no letting up of international efforts.

Paul de Lay Director of Evidence, Monitoring & Policy at UNAIDS came to Parliament to brief MPs on the report in November. The briefing high-

lighted advances that mean 3 million people are now accessing life-saving drugs and a third of HIV positive pregnant women are receiving drugs to prevent transmission of the infection to their children.

Some countries have made excellent progress, such as Botswana, where there is almost universal access to HIV drugs. Globally, however, access to

treatment is not keeping up with infection rates. For every two people on treatment, five are newly infected.

The report finds that globally only 40% of males and fewer females aged 15-24 know about HIV and how to avoid transmission. It concludes that prevention, thus far under-prioritized, needs to take centre stage.

The Government's Sexual Health Strategy was reviewed this summer.

Hear what the reviewers say we should be doing to improve the nation's sexual health at a briefing at 5pm 15th December, Committee Room 4A

Enact free prescription promise soon - urge MPs

Members of the APPG have welcomed the promise of free prescriptions for all people with long-term health conditions, including HIV, but are calling for the policy to be enacted urgently.

Cancer patients will be first to benefit from the changes, and they will benefit from 2009 but there are no indications as

yet for the time-scales for other conditions. The current list of conditions hasn't been changed since 1968 and was put together before HIV had ever been identified.

"It has taken 40 years to get this list looked at again—let's hope the proposed changes happen a little faster this time." said Vice Chair of the APPG

Evan Harris. Although HIV medication is free, users often need other medicines for which they have to pay prescription charges of £7.10 per item. The cost of buying drugs, for example to control common side-effects of HIV medication or to cope with opportunistic infections, is pushing many people with HIV further into poverty.

MP charity focus



Jeremy Hunt MP, Vice Chair of the APPG with Hotcourses pupils in Kenya

Hotcourses Foundation

Hotcourses Foundation was set up by Jeremy Hunt MP in 2004 with the help of employees and friends of the UK educational publisher, Hotcourses. It funds the education of some of the poorest children in the world including over 300 HIV positive children and young adults in Kenya and Uganda. The Foundation has also built and funded a primary school for AIDS-affected orphans, based in Kitui Province, Eastern Kenya. The school provides education for an additional 257 children, all of whom are orphans who have lost their parents or guardians to HIV/AIDS and around 10 of whom are themselves HIV positive.

Sending a child to school can cost as little as £15 a month and provides them with the best hope for the life of promise they have been denied to date. For more information please see www.hotcourses.com/foundation

DFID to set itself HIV Targets

On the eve of the publication of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to go alongside DFID's new AIDS Strategy, David Borrow MP expressed the hope it would clarify exactly what the Government intends to achieve with its AIDS money.

The strategy, launched in June, promises £6bn to 'strengthen health systems' by 2015. However it is not yet clear how much will be spent on HIV projects.

Strengthening health systems, by training more doctors and nurses, for example, is recognised to be crucial if new HIV infections are to be reduced and people who are already infected are to gain access to the necessary drugs and care. However, without specific funding, HIV, which is often associated with socially excluded groups such as gay men and sex workers, has a tendency to slip down the political agenda.

'DFID is right that health systems matter' said David Borrow, 'but it's an approach that needs to be combined with key targets and indicators, or our money could be swallowed up into vast global health need, allowing HIV to continue to hold the developing world hostage.'

The International Development Select Committee is due to report soon on the DFID's AIDS strategy.



David Borrow MP replaces Neil Gerard MP as Chairman of the APPG. Neil - whose dedication to HIV and leadership has been recognised by Secretary of State, his peers and the NGO community - remains a Vice-Chair of the APPG.

One in three people with HIV in UK still undiagnosed

One in three people living with HIV in the UK are still undiagnosed, was the key message of the Health Protection Agency at a recent briefing of the APPG. The Agency bases this on anonymous blood sampling from sexual health clinics.

The findings reveal a serious public health vulnerability. People who do not know they are infected are less likely to take meas-

ures that prevent the transmission of their infection. Additionally, people who are HIV+ but not on treatment, depending on the stage of their infection, are more infectious than those whose viral loads is being kept under control by drugs. The Department of Health has recently announced £400,000 to reduce the numbers of undiagnosed cases, which has

been welcomed by the Group. New clinical guidelines also say HIV testing should no longer be the preserve of HIV specialists. Sandra Gidley MP, Vice Chair of the Group said, 'The NHS needs to take a pro-active approach to testing. All GPs should be able to offer tests and outreach clinics could be provided for at risk communities.'

"We need a pro-active approach to testing. All GPs should be able to offer tests. Outreach clinics could be provided for at-risk communities"
Sandra Gidley MP, Vice Chair of the APPG

APPG re-affirms link with Russian colleagues in Mexico

The Adviser to the UK's AIDS APPG met with the Group's Russian counterpart to discuss joint working at the International AIDS conference in Mexico in August. The Russian parliamentary organisation was set up following a visit from the UK APPG in 2005.

Russia was described

at the conference in Mexico as 'on the verge of a generalised HIV epidemic', but currently infections are concentrated in marginalised groups, with injecting drug use accounting for two-thirds of the one million infections. However, helping wean addicts off drugs through methadone re-

placement therapy is illegal and there is a dire need for more needle exchange programmes.

The Russian Working Group on the Prevention of AIDS and the UK APPG will continue to work together to highlight the growing epidemic in Eurasia.

The APPG on AIDS: Keeping HIV/AIDS on the political agenda

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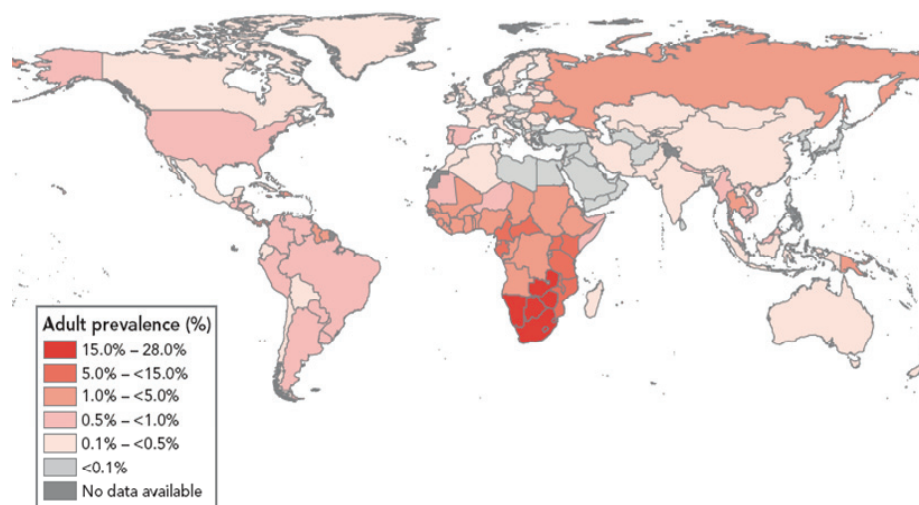
Baroness Northover

Members of The All Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS believe that HIV/AIDS is one of the most serious threats facing the world in the 21st century and that as Parliamentarians we should play our part in addressing the epidemic.

At home in the UK, where around 73,000 people are infected with HIV, we believe that careful policy, respectful of human rights, is critical to tackling the disease and the serious social exclusion that can go along with it. Abroad, where HIV infection rates run as high as 26% and people die needlessly every day, we believe we have a responsibility to help.

If you would like to help keep HIV/AIDS on the political agenda or find out about the implications of policy debates for people living with HIV, please contact David Borrow MP, Chairman of the Group or Veronica Oakeshott, its Policy Adviser.

A global view of HIV infection 33 million people living with HIV, 2007



Could an Obama presidency herald an era of HIV enlightenment? [comment](#)

The signs are good, with a manifesto commitment to 're-write' much of the PEP-FAR Bill (President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief) to "allow best practices – not ideology – to drive funding for HIV/AIDS programs". This alludes to the current restrictions on condom promotion by projects receiving US funding - restrictions which the APPG believes are counter-productive.

In the USA, Obama sup-

ports 'comprehensive sex education that is age-appropriate'. He has promised to expand funding for research into a vaccine and microbicides.

On World AIDS Day in 2006, Barack Obama said of HIV that "Neither philanthropist nor scientist, neither government nor church, can solve this problem on their own - AIDS must be an all-hands-on-deck effort." *His hands on deck may help.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **World AIDS Day event** UN-AIDS briefing on global epidemic trends and figures. 25th Nov 5pm Attlee Suite
- December**
- What does a health systems approach mean for HIV? 4th Dec Midday Attlee Suite
- Briefing on the Review of the Sexual Health Strategy 15th Dec 5pm Committee Rm 4A
- February**
- Half-term recess APPG visit to Geneva to UNAIDS, UNITAID, WHO and others. MPs and Peers only. Email oakeshottv@parliament.uk

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GROUP ON AIDS

