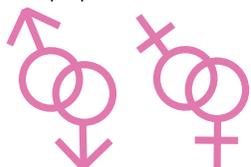


# A Picture of Health

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** It is estimated that around 20K people living in Tameside identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual in orientation. Homophobia, social acceptance and, discrimination can mean LGBT people are at risk of poorer health than the general population. There are many matters we could explore on this topic, too many to mention here, so this month's Picture of Health is just a snapshot of the bigger issues affecting LGBT people in Tameside.



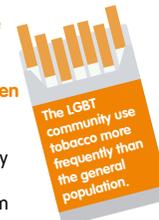
**2** This month marks World AIDS Day. We've come a long way since the first World AIDS day 27 years ago, and yet many people will still carry around the 'facts' that they learned through the public information adverts and films of the 80's. We can all do with keeping our knowledge up to date, so ask yourself this; Are you clued up? Take this short quiz to find out, you might be surprised by how much you don't know!



**3** Older LGBT people are more likely to live alone than heterosexual people the same age, and are less likely to have children to call upon in their senior years. One in five older LGBT people has nobody to contact in times of crisis, and they are more likely to access social care. Whilst attitudes are changing for the better, older people who grew up in times of less tolerance may fear having to return to the closet if they need to be cared for in later life. It's important to remember that every older person is an individual, because nobody should have to hide who they are at any age. Watch this video to understand more.



**4** The LGBT community use tobacco more frequently than the general population. Around 25% of lesbians, 32% of transgender people, and 33% of gay men are regularly reaching for the smokes. The reasons for doing so are complex and can be linked to mental health, family upbringing, and what goes on in social circles. Whatever the reason, people from LGBT communities may need extra help to kick the habit, as more people around them are likely to smoke. HIV positive smokers are also more likely to develop cancers of the lung, anus, mouth and throat, so for those with a diagnosis there's all the more reason to quit.



**5** Mental health issues like depression and anxiety are more common in LGBT communities. In a survey 44% of LGBT people said they had thought about suicide compared to 26% of heterosexual and non-trans people. This may relate to feelings of self-acceptance, and attitudes of friends and family amongst other things. Whilst society is changing, experiences of homophobia, bullying and discrimination are also still commonplace, negatively influencing mental health. Pink Therapy is an organisation that specialises in talking therapies for gender and sexual diversity clients who are living with mental health issues.



**6** Loneliness is a feeling we all experience when we don't have as much social contact, or as many of the right type of relationships as we would like. In a survey of LGBT people living in Tameside, 42% said they felt lonely frequently. Whilst most people have a mix of friends from different walks of life, it can sometimes help to meet other people who feel or look a similar way, with whom you can relax and chat openly. There are lots of groups meeting regularly across the North West to do this. Click here to visit the LGBT Foundation for details of group meetings for men, women and transgender people.



**7** Domestic abuse isn't the preserve of straight relationships. Around half of gay and bisexual men have experienced domestic abuse at the hands of a family member or partner. A quarter of lesbian and bisexual women have also experienced domestic violence in a relationship, with two thirds of those saying the perpetrator was a woman. In a recent survey, a huge 64% of the transgender respondents reported having been the victim of domestic abuse, more than double the level from non-trans respondents. Without exception, nobody should expect or accept to be treated this way. Broken Rainbow UK is a charity dedicated to helping people in abusive LGBT relationships.



**Broken Rainbow UK**  
the LGBT domestic violence charity

**8** Binge drinking is nearly twice as common in LGBT communities than the general population. For some people going teetotal just isn't going to happen, and with the Christmas upon us, the booze will be in full flow. Making unwise decisions whilst drunk can lead to a trip to A&E, or perhaps a visit to the Sexual Health Clinic in the New Year. If having a dry Christmas is out of the question, drinking responsibly is the next best thing to protect your health and safety, this goes for everyone. Keep a tab on your drinks with the Change 4 Life alcohol app.



Binge drinking is nearly twice as common in LGBT communities than the general population.

**9** Two fifths of lesbian and bisexual women exercise daily, much more than the average for women in general, and beating the boys by a long way. In a survey of gay and bisexual men, three quarters didn't meet the recommendations for physical activity. Getting a moderate 150 mins or a vigorous 75 mins activity per week needn't be a drudge on the treadmill. If hiking, biking, climbing and camping is more your idea of fun, Outdoor Lads organise group excursions and events for gay and bisexual men to get outside and enjoy the elements.



**10** In a survey, 50% of lesbian and bisexual women eligible for cervical screening failed to respond to a routine invitation for a cervical screening test. Whilst advice used to be that women who had not slept with a man didn't need a test, this is no longer the case. All women between the ages of 25 and 64 who have a cervix need to get screened to check for signs of cancer.



**11** A person living with HIV can expect to live as long as someone without it providing they are on a successful treatment regime. One in 20 gay and bisexual men in the UK is living with HIV, and yet one in five is undiagnosed. This means they are missing out on vital treatment to maintain good health. Finding out your HIV status is important, because HIV damages your immune system. Knowing means you can take steps to protect yourself against the serious illnesses that can take hold as a result. Only half of LGBT people in Tameside said they had come out to their GP. For those who are uncomfortable asking a GP for an HIV test, Tameside's Sexual Health Service, the Orange Rooms, offer a number of different options to establish your HIV status.



**12** Being out, feeling accepted, and being able to be yourself without fear are rights all LGBT people should enjoy. Sadly one in five younger LGBT people have experienced physical attacks in school because of their sexual or gender identity, and over half of young LGBT people have deliberately harmed themselves. LGBT Out Loud welcomes young people aged 13+ to weekly meetings, to access help and advice on how to cope well growing up as an LGBT teen in Tameside.

