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## PRESS RELEASE

### **NEW BLACK GAY MEN'S PROJECT AT GMFA** ***BIG UP Seeks Volunteers for Black Gay Men's Work.***

LONDON, 9th April 2008 – Black gay men are almost twice as likely as white British gay men to be living with HIV<sup>1</sup> but there is very little HIV prevention work that specifically targets Black gay men. GMFA are launching a new three year project for Black gay men, thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery Fund. Big Up, the Black gay men's volunteer group at GMFA, will be carrying out research to investigate the sexual health needs of Black gay men, and in turn provide them with better services. New volunteers are needed to become involved in peer education projects, developing culturally appropriate HIV awareness interventions and outreach programmes, aimed at other Black gay men, including those men who have sex with men but don't identify as gay.

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<sup>1</sup> 'HIV, sexual risk, and ethnicity among men in England who have sex with men'. F Hickson, D Reid, P Weatherburn, M Stephens, W Nutland, P Boakye.

“I am thrilled to be a part of the GMFA team, and to have the opportunity to continue their work with Black gay men,” said Jaime Sylla, the new Project Manager for the Big Up group. “I very much look forward to working with volunteers to produce campaigns by black gay men and for black gay men, in an attempt to reverse the high levels of HIV infection amongst this group.”

Through a series of questionnaires, and case studies, Big Up volunteers will be able to anonymously share their experiences of sexual health services to establish what particular barriers Black gay men face in accessing sexual health information. The data gathered will form the basis of a report that will be circulated amongst GUM clinics and other health services.

“The HIV prevention needs of gay men and of African communities are acknowledged, but Black gay men are disproportionately affected by HIV and there is little work that acknowledges both their ethnicity and sexuality,” said Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes for GMFA. “We are delighted that with the generosity of the Big Lottery fund the Big Up group are able to continue their work in addressing the inequalities Black and ethnic minority gay men experience in regards to their sexual health needs. This project will not only provide new services, but ensure that we are able to deliver targeted health work that Black gay communities identify as needed.”

The ultimate goal of the project is to reduce the transmission of HIV amongst the Black gay community. The volunteer group will also help to provide services to encourage and equip Black gay men to look after

themselves and their sexual partners. Big Up interventions in the past include the popular Carnival events and the 'In the Family' booklets, which celebrate the builders of the Black gay community.

GMFA welcomes all people, irrespective of ethnicity, sexuality or HIV status, to get involved as volunteers. If you are interested in getting involved in Big Up, or volunteering for GMFA, contact: [newvol@gmfa.org.uk](mailto:newvol@gmfa.org.uk).

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### **Notes to editor:**

#### **About GMFA:**

GMFA was established in 1992 and is the UK's leading charity dedicated to gay men's health. GMFA's mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. We believe that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves, and so we use the knowledge and ideas of our 170 volunteers (most of them gay men) to design and plan our thought provoking sexual health interventions. We have received international acclaim for our Sex and Sexual Health website ([www.gmfa.org.uk/sex](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/sex)). Our other websites include a detailed listing of sexual health services available for gay men in London ([www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices)), an information resource for HIV positive gay men ([www.gmfa.org.uk/positive](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/positive)) and a guide to gay sports and social groups in London ([www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide)). All of our sites can be accessed at [www.gmfa.org.uk](http://www.gmfa.org.uk). GMFA produce a range of advertising campaigns, leaflets, postcards and booklets. Independent surveys have concluded that our campaigns reach up to 60% of the London gay population and we are the most reliable agency at reaching gay men. In addition to this we distribute our own health magazine, FS, free to London's gay bars and clubs to further educate gay men about relationships, their bodies, general health and STIs. Over the last fourteen years we have provided courses for over 10,000 gay men, providing safer sex education, life skills and stop smoking courses. We currently provide a range of groupwork interventions across England and Wales. GMFA has Big Lottery funding to create sexual health interventions for Black gay men in London.