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## PRESS RELEASE

### **NO CUTS IN GAY MEN'S HIV PREVENTION Fight Against Funding Cuts Pays Off**

LONDON, 20 December 2004 -- GMFA today received an announcement from NHS London stating that HIV prevention funds for gay men will not be cut. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have been told to back down on their previous stance that money was too tight.

"HIV prevention work for gay men in London was going to be cut by 36%, which would have meant that some of the existing services would just stop," said Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes for GMFA. "These cuts would have been disastrous for gay men's health. Thankfully the community pulled together, with the gay press rallying the troops to write letters and sign petitions. We've now heard that this hard work has paid off and funding will continue without the cuts."

The cuts were announced when London's PCTs proposed switching funding for gay men's projects to pay for prevention work in Black African communities. While work in both communities is important, charities and the general public vehemently argued that more money was needed to fund both programmes, rather than slicing up an already overstretched pie. Many argued that spending more on prevention work would be cost effective in the long run as NHS calculations showed that high HIV treatment costs mean spending between £500k and £1million on preventing just one HIV infection is cost effective.

The initial amount allocated to prevention work for gay men, African communities and treatment information for people living with HIV was £2.3m. With the African prevention programme now likely to receive additional funding the budget has risen

to around £2.8m. The current programme of London HIV prevention work for gay men includes GMFA's websites and advertising campaigns, the Freedoms condom scheme, free counselling and groupwork services, sexual health booklets and outreach workers in gay venues.

NHS London reviewed the decision at a board meeting in light of the evidence and complaints and has now agreed that London's PCTs have more than enough in this year's financial surplus to increase HIV prevention funding by £540k, so that both programmes can go forward.

"It's great news both for Gay and Black African communities," added Hodson, "and a great start to the New Year."

- Ends -

If more information about this or any other of GMFA's campaigns and actions is required,

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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. Yearly we deliver three new mass media campaigns in the gay press to disseminate up to date information regarding HIV and STIs to the gay male community. 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. Annually, we deliver 1000 hours of group work to educate gay men in safer sex, and over the last fourteen years have provided courses for over 10,000 gay men. We currently provide a range of groupwork interventions in London and across England and Wales. GMFA recently received Big Lottery funding to create sexual health interventions for Black gay men in London. 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).