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PRESS RELEASE

A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR GAY MEN WITH HIV

LONDON, 28 AUGUST – Although the medical treatment, and consequently life expectancy, is improving for people living with HIV, many of the psychological and social challenges for positive people remain. Research carried out by GMFA found that gay men diagnosed with HIV feel significantly less optimistic about their future compared to before they were diagnosed. GMFA's research sought to discover how living with HIV had affected gay men's lives, including the way they viewed their health, their careers and their romantic prospects. Many HIV positive gay men were pessimistic about their health and survival chances, causing some to believe that there was no point in planning for their long-term future or to engage in destructive behaviours which could have an impact on their mental and physical health.

GMFA is launching a new press advertising campaign entitled 'Positive Future' designed to encourage HIV positive gay men to take

control of their lives and to plan for the future. The campaign seeks to do this through relating the personal experiences of other HIV positive gay men who have experienced difficulty as a result of their HIV diagnosis but who now have their lives back on track.

According to GMFA's research, before diagnosis, 75.6% of men felt optimistic about the future. At time of their HIV diagnosis this figure fell to 17.4% and although this rose to 53.8% at the time of completing the survey, the figure is still significantly lower than before diagnosis. This lack of optimism caused some of these men to believe that there was no point in planning for their long-term future and to engage in potentially destructive behaviours as a result.

The research highlighted four main areas of need: looking after their general day to day health; planning for their financial future; returning to work or continuing with their career path and starting or maintaining romantic relationships.

“Although HIV treatments now mean that many people living with HIV are able to look forward to a relatively long and healthy life, there are still huge emotional and psychological challenges that come with being diagnosed positive. Many HIV positive people feel isolated, or that they are somehow not worthy of love, and this can impact not only on their health but also on their ability to take control of their lives,” said Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes for GMFA. “Being diagnosed with HIV can be devastating, living with any incurable and infectious illness is harsh, but we hope that the examples in this campaign will help other HIV positive gay men to envisage and plan for their long-term future.”

The campaign, which was sponsored by the M.A.C AIDS Fund, will also refer men to GMFA's new website for HIV positive gay men as well as other appropriate services. The website can be viewed at www.gmfa.org.uk/positive.

- Ends -

For more information about this or any other of GMFA's campaigns and actions, contact:

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Notes to editor

The Positive Future campaign can be seen in full from 29 AUGUST at: www.gmfa.org.uk/positive/advertising-campaigns/index

355 HIV positive gay men based in the UK completed GMFA's survey into attitudes of diagnosed positive gay men.

The survey found that at the time of their diagnosis, 93.8% of men thought their life expectancy would be reduced; at the time of completing the survey this figure was still high at 71.8%.

74.2% of men said their career motivation was lower to some degree than at the time of their diagnosis.

63.7% of men were less self-confident than before diagnosis.

79.7% of men said they have found forming intimate relationships more difficult, with 36.8% saying that they found it much more difficult.

76% of men have found maintaining intimate relationships more difficult, with 27.6% saying that they found it much more difficult.

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). Our other websites include a detailed listing of sexual health services available for gay men in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/londonservices), an information resource for HIV positive gay men (www.gmfa.org.uk/positive) and a guide to gay sports and social groups in London (www.gmfa.org.uk/theguide). All of our sites can be accessed at 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.