



Unit 43, Eurolink Centre

49 Effra Road

LONDON SW2 1BZ

020 7738 6872

matthew.hodson@gmfa.org.uk

www.gmfa.org.uk/sex

PRESS RELEASE

ASA Overturn Decision on Health Promotion

Gays Win Right to Say Fuck

London, 30 November 06 -- Gay men's health charity, GMFA, has won its lengthy battle with the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) to lift a ban on health promotion ads containing words which they considered offensive and obscene. The ban came following a single, anonymous complaint regarding an advert from the popular *RelationTips* campaign, seen in The Pink Paper. The advertisement featured the words "we'd rather fuck than watch TV".

"To give gay men the best information about HIV and AIDS, GMFA needs to be able to communicate frankly about the kinds of sex that gay men have, using the same language that gay men use. The initial ruling presented a very real threat to effective HIV prevention work," said Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes for GMFA. "I am grateful for the

support that we have received from other agencies and also from individuals and I'm delighted that the ASA Council has recognised the validity and importance of our work."

Following a lengthy appeal from GMFA, which used research to show both the need for frank language in health promotion and the effectiveness of its campaigns, the ASA overturned its ruling allowing the advertisements to continue. The final report from the ASA deemed that the content of the ads was relevant to the services being advertised and that GMFA and The Pink Paper had taken reasonable and responsible steps to ensure that they were unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence.

"Our campaigns are always distributed through gay oriented venues or publications and all of our campaigns are tested with gay men. To say that the audience would find them offensive is a little ridiculous," added Hodson.

The campaign in question was not only pre-tested with the target audience, but also by other independent HIV prevention agencies and researchers in gay men's sexual health. All parties found the campaign to be neither offensive nor inappropriate. The Pink Paper had received no complaints or adverse comments from readers about the GMFA advert in question and so defied the ban, continuing to print the adverts despite the initial ruling, as they felt it was in the best interest of public health.

- Ends -

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

Matthew Hodson

Day Phone Number: 020 7738 6872

Night Phone Number: 07792 412 834

Email: matthew.hodson@gmfa.org.uk

About GMFA:

GMFA was established in 1992 and is the only charity dedicated to gay men's health in the UK. Despite progress towards legal equality, gay men still suffer from inequalities in health. Gay men account for 75 percent of new HIV infections in the UK. They are at a greater risk of sexual and mental health problems and are more likely to be affected by cancer and illnesses related to drug and alcohol use. GMFA's mission is to improve gay men's health by increasing the control they have over their own lives. The majority of our work is on HIV and STI prevention within the London area. Yearly we deliver 3 new mass media campaigns in the gay press to disseminate up to date information regarding HIV and STIs to the gay male community. Independent evaluation has found that our campaigns reach up to 55% of the London gay population. In addition to this we distribute our own health magazine, FS, free to a variety of London 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 believe that the best health promotion for gay men comes from gay men themselves, and so our campaigns and actions are developed by volunteers, both HIV positive and negative, most of them gay men.

References

1. *Mapping the Issues. HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United Kingdom: 2005.* The United Kingdom Collaborative Group for HIV and STI Surveillance Nov 2005.