

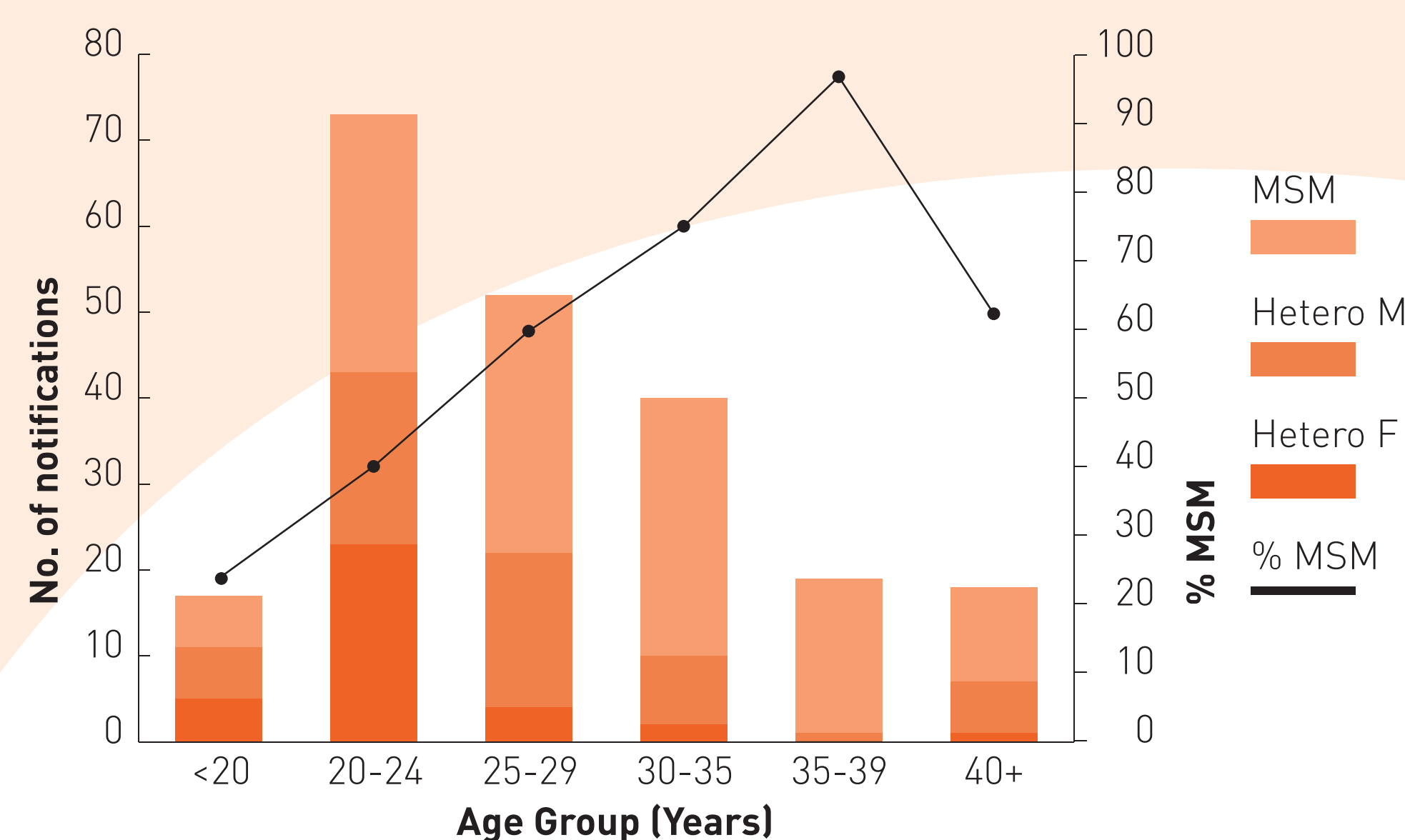
# OMG... GONORRHOEA... IT'S TRENDING

A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR GONORRHOEA CONTROL IN IRELAND SUSAN DONLON<sup>1</sup>, FIONNUALA COONEY<sup>2</sup>, DERVAL IGOE<sup>3</sup>

## BACKGROUND: GONORRHOEA INFECTIONS INCREASE IN IRELAND 2012 AND 2013

### ISSUE:

Rise in number of gonorrhoea cases in Eastern counties in Ireland in 2013. The figure shows the number of gonorrhoea cases and proportion of men who have sex with men (MSM) by transmission category and age group notified in East and South-East Health Regions of Ireland, Q1-2013 (Health Protection Surveillance Centre, Ireland).



- Multidisciplinary Control Group convened in December 2012 consisting of Specialists in Public Health, Consultants in Genito-Urinary Medicine and Infectious Diseases, General Practitioners, Surveillance Scientists, Healthcare Managers as well as Health Promotion and Public Communications experts.
- Retrospective collection of enhanced surveillance information on gonorrhoea notifications in the East and South East regions of Ireland.
- Two main risk groups identified: **(1)** Men who have sex with men; **(2)** Young heterosexuals.
- Identified need for a gonorrhoea information campaign targeting specifically young heterosexuals, as an information campaign targeting MSM was already in progress by the Gay Health Network.

## METHODS: A SOCIAL MEDIA GONORRHOEA INFORMATION CAMPAIGN TARGETING YOUNG PEOPLE

### EXPERT WORKING GROUP:

A Working Group of statutory, youth and community organisations was established in September 2013 to develop the campaign. The Working Group consisted of experts in health promotion, social media experts, and organisations experienced in working with young people. Partners for the campaign were Dublin AIDS Alliance, Health Service Executive Crisis Pregnancy Programme, SpunOut.ie, The Union of Students in Ireland and the HSE Health Promotion and Improvement Department (who also provided support funding for the campaign).

### Aim of the campaign:

to develop and implement a social media campaign to raise awareness of increasing gonorrhoea infections in Ireland.

### Objectives:

- (1)** to promote information about gonorrhoea symptoms, transmission, prevention and testing;
- (2)** to promote the consistent use of condoms for sex, including oral sex;
- (3)** to promote regular STI testing, and particularly the availability of free testing.

### Target Population Group:

Young (heterosexual) people, primarily aged 18 to 25 years.

### CAMPAIGN (PEER) DEVELOPMENT:

- Youth-proofing guidelines were used, taking account of the Working Group organisations previous experiences, including the use of eye-catching imagery, use of humour, quick and clear information and positive and non-judgemental messages.
- Young people volunteered to model for the visuals, and all visuals and key messages were 'tested' with young people.
- Young people chose the hashtag - #OMGsti - for use during social media promotion.

### CAMPAIGN RESOURCES:

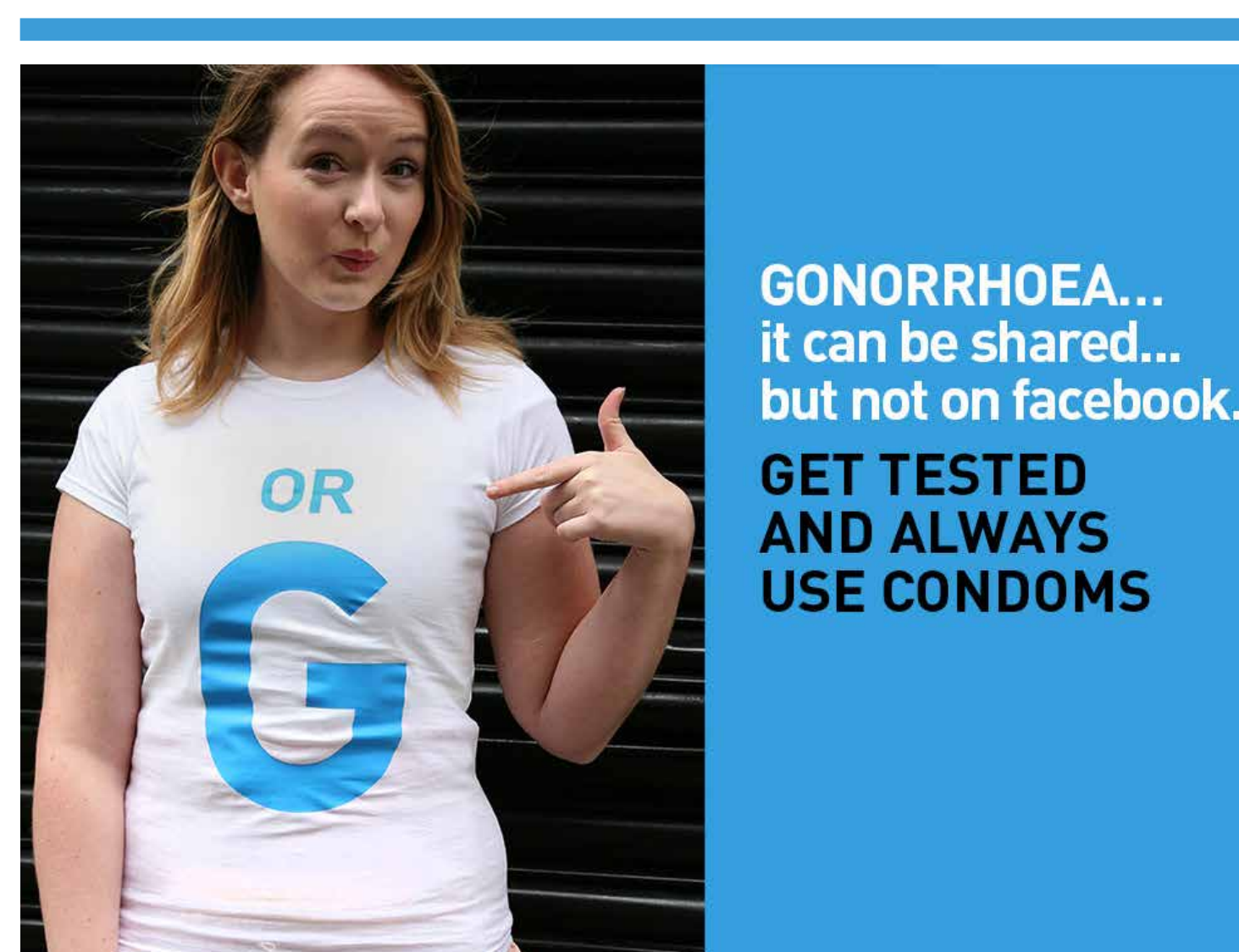
- Website - [www.yoursexualhealth.ie](http://www.yoursexualhealth.ie)
- Visuals and posters developed for social media promotion including signposting to the campaign website.
- A pocket-sized information booklet.

### CHANNELS OF PROMOTION:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Irish (men and women's) lifestyle websites
- Print and Broadcast Media

### DATES OF IMPLEMENTATION:

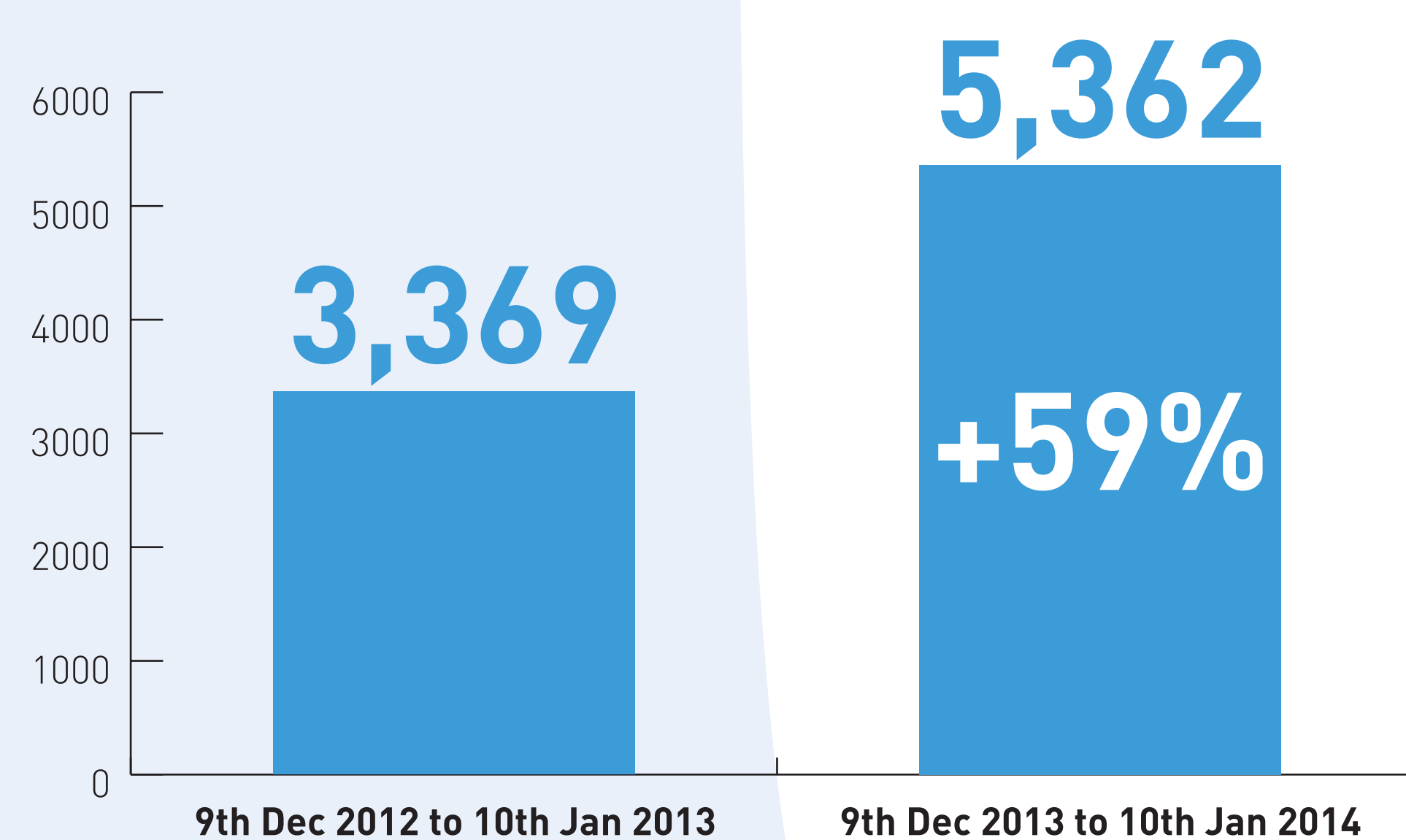
December 2013 to mid-February 2014



## RESULTS: LARGE YOUNG AUDIENCE REACHED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

### WEBSITE ([WWW.YOURSEXUALHEALTH.IE](http://WWW.YOURSEXUALHEALTH.IE)):

- **59%** increase in website visits compared to the same period a year previous to the campaign.
- **48%** increase in page views, from 9,053 page views to 13,369 page views.
- **91%** increase in page views on free STI testing clinic information.



### FACEBOOK:

- Up to 190,000 people reached through working group partners' Facebook pages.
- An engagement rate of 6% was recorded on one partner Facebook page (Just Carry One), well above a 1.11% benchmark for similar pages (research by [www.socialbakers.com](http://www.socialbakers.com)).

### REACHING THE TARGET AUDIENCE VIA FACEBOOK:

- Of the people who engaged with the Facebook campaign posts on the 'Just Carry One' page ([www.facebook.com/justcarryone](http://www.facebook.com/justcarryone)), 53.7% were female and 46.3% were male.
- Of the females, 95.9% were aged 24 and younger with 66.5% aged 13 to 17 and 29.4% aged 18 to 24.
- Of the males, 98% were aged 24 and younger with 69.5% aged 13 to 17 and 28.5% aged 18 to 24.

### TWITTER:

- The hashtag, #OMGsti, trended on Twitter in Ireland on the first day of the campaign, reported by Trendsmap Ireland.

### LIFESTYLE WEBSITES:

- The campaign culminated in a Valentine's Day promotion on popular Irish lifestyle websites Joe.ie (for men) and Her.ie (for women).
- Promotion included an editorial (viewed 6,620 times) and a competition (with 795 entries).
- Of the referrals to the campaign website on the final week of promotion (10th to 16th February 2014), 44% came from Her.ie and 16% from Joe.ie.

### MEDIA COVERAGE:

Considerable media interest with articles published in all print and online media, national and local radio broadcasts and one broadcast on a national TV channel.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS: USING SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVE IN REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION



- The gonorrhoea information campaign was successful in reaching the target audience.
- Using social media channels to target a young audience in sexual health promotion was very effective.
- Involving peers in campaign development was successful with engaging a young target audience.
- Communications and collaboration between the multi-disciplinary Control Group and the expert Working Group was very beneficial to the development of the campaign with input from a range of experts and linking up-to-date surveillance data with key messages of the campaign.
- The work of the Multi-disciplinary Control Group was discontinued in June 2014 once the rise in Gonorrhoea notifications was halted.

- Build on the campaign's success to develop a national STI Prevention campaign.
- Utilise social media channels for future sexual health campaigns targeting young people.
- Engage with and involve young people with development of similar future campaigns.
- Resource the expert Working Group and multi-disciplinary Control Group to continue collaborative and cross-sectoral work on STI prevention.

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