



## EDITORIAL

Happy New Year and many thanks to all our friends, supporters and volunteers for your help and contributions in making the 20<sup>th</sup> year of LASS so successful. The new national data for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland shows HIV rates are still rising locally, presenting us with the on-going challenges to reduce HIV stigma, discrimination and prejudice and increase HIV testing and awareness.

We start our 21<sup>st</sup> year with a new outreach service in Loughborough, increased attendance at LASS training and awareness raising events, and plans to introduce community HIV testing. We also have an expectation that, like other Charities working with some of the poorest people locally, we will face fund raising challenges ahead together with an increased demand for our services, as individuals suffer the effects of the current economic situation.

On 25<sup>th</sup> March we will launch our new DVD and web resource – A Life and Kicking – Living with HIV in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We think this will be an excellent tool for use in training, awareness raising

sessions and to give hope to people newly diagnosed with HIV. Huge thanks go to the 4 positive people who have shared their life stories with us.

I hope you will enjoy reading this new edition Ribbon and also take some time to look at our website where we are asking for feedback as we plan to update it. Please pass this copy on to your friends, family and colleagues. Any ideas you have to help raise awareness of HIV and to increase our charitable funds are most welcome.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jenny Hand  
CEO



## FUNDRAISING

LASS administers four different funds in support of Service Users - The Foodbank, David Manley Hardship Fund, Tim Aubrey Complementary Therapies Fund, and Winnie's Fund for Children. No statutory funding is available to pay for these services, so we have to raise the money ourselves. £24,000 is needed to maintain these funds in 2008-09, and so far we have raised just over £20,000.

This money has come from three main sources:- A grant of £9,660 from Elton John AIDS Foundation, £3,200 raised from the sponsored walk in May, and £1,100 collected in December at the Marks and Spencer bag-packing day. The remaining £6,000 has been raised from payroll giving, individual donations and a number of small-scale events.

### Plans for the future

2009 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first LASS sponsored swim. Since then there has been a swim every other year, and so far a total of around £7,000 has been raised from these events. The next sponsored swim is being arranged for Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May.

We're looking for 12-15 swimmers to take part. There is no fixed distance. Just decide how far you are going to swim and ask people to sponsor you for that distance. At the last swim in 2007 people were sponsored for distances ranging from a third of a mile up to a mile and a half.

If you are interested in improving your fitness and raising money for LASS, please contact Gareth on (0116) 255 9995 or email [gareth@lass.org.uk](mailto:gareth@lass.org.uk)

Finally, online 'Celebration Giving' is catching on fast, and has raised £1,500 for LASS in the last couple of years. If you have a birthday or special event, it's a great way to help your favourite charity. It's easy too – visit [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) and create your own fundraising page, and then simply direct your family and friends to that page to donate whatever they want, rather than buying presents. For further information, contact Gareth on 0116 255 9995 or by email at [gareth@lass.org.uk](mailto:gareth@lass.org.uk)

### Volunteers Meeting

Thursday 12th February, 2-4pm or 6-8pm

Discussion about

Fundraising, Events and Volunteer Issues

### Sophia's scarves

Hand knitted, warm, soft and cosy.

Black, white, coffee, blue . £8 each

Ring Melissa at LASS. 0116 255 9995



### Direct Services Report – HIV related Dementia issues

A concern for LASS at the moment is that we are seeing a rise in the number of service users experiencing mental health problems and in particular HIV related Dementia. Presently we are working with around 18 people in this situation.

To explain this condition – the body usually has a great defence system for protecting the brain from illness; this is called the blood brain barrier. However in certain instances HIV can cross this barrier leading to nerve cell death. This condition may then lead to confusion, loss of memory, short attention span, apathy, irritability, vision problems and poor judgement, often subtle at times they can gradually worsen.

Service users experiencing these problems can feel frustrated and they become vulnerable in that others may take advantage of them financially or physically.

LASS works to be extra vigilant in ensuring that we do not breach a persons rights in line with the Mental Capacity Act when providing a service to them, for example is the person 'fit' to make the decision? We might not like their choice but they have a right to make it.

In realising someone is a vulnerable adult LASS act quickly in contacting appropriate agencies, referring to Psychiatry, Infectious Diseases Unit,

Social Services or Psychology as appropriate for assessment and treatment.

People with HIV-related dementia (as with other non related dementia) may become sexually disinhibited and may not have the capacity to use condoms or practice safer sex. In these circumstances they may be deemed a risk to the public and they too are at risk of infection with other STI's as well as reinfection with HIV perhaps even the drug resistant type.

In this scenario the Direct Services Team stay engaged in working with the service user; we weigh up the needs of the person, support them to ensure that they are treated with equality and respect, especially if they are sectioned or imprisoned. We advocate on their behalf and are part of team that on return home visits to compliment the work of other health related service providers.

The public health issue here is dealt with by our Sexual Health Promotion Team.

The Direct Services team have worked both in NHS mental health units and in prison providing support to service users.

I have worked with LASS for 20 years first as a volunteer, now as a paid member of staff coming up to 19 years. Looking back over that time Dementia was an early issue; we were concerned that there was neither the service available nor the will to provide

support to carers (families and friends) of HIV positive people. LASS set up the Respite Group as a result, and this group of volunteers and staff spent many hours sitting with people who were very ill, giving time off/out for carers.

With the use of AZT and later medications the Respite Group was no longer required as dementia locally became almost non-existent. However people are living much longer now - we have service users HIV positive for over 25 years - we see again similar problems arising.

New drugs such as Atripla - a 3 in1 pill - being used at present can hold dementia at bay, leading to a better quality of life.

It is important that people are tested for HIV so that medications and interventions can take place and, above all, adherence to medications is paramount in staying well.

It is wonderful that medications are available and progressing. LASS at the end of it's 20<sup>th</sup> year can state that it supports people who have been living with HIV/AIDS for a quarter of a century, they are living well, have careers, going to college setting up in business' and having children.

Marion Lewin  
Direct Services Manager

### Meet one of our new LASS Board Members Bernadette

I have been with LASS from April 2006 when I had my first volunteers' training. I came to LASS because of my personal loss due to HIV/AIDS and the promise that I made to myself, "To want to know more about HIV/AIDS and work hand in hand with those who share the same vision with me, to one day live in an AIDS free world". I have had the opportunity to work with the Sexual Health Promotion Team on the awareness raising events in Leicester, Rutland and Leicestershire. I have taken part in a wide range of events and festivals over the years, providing stalls, displays and information distribution.

I am also working with the Direct Services Team, mainly on Drop in Days on Tuesdays and Fridays. This has given me an opportunity to interact with a lot of service users, cook for them or just be there for them in their time of

need. Whenever possible, I have attended all the training offered by LASS. I have enjoyed being involved in fundraising opportunities.

I am at the moment studying for a degree in Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations. My course touches almost every aspect of Voluntary Organisations. I feel privileged to be on the LASS Board of Trustees. I believe I can make constructive contributions to the board meetings. I am inspired by the work that LASS is doing in promoting positive living for those infected and affected by HIV. I also agree that we should keep HIV high on the public's agenda. I am very committed to LASS's vision and mission.

I am at the moment taking the knowledge gained from LASS to Kadoma, Zimbabwe where I have been involved in the setting up of an orphanage, Jessica's House. It's going to provide practical help to the HIV orphans and will be working together with other agencies in raising awareness as well as providing home based counselling.



Bernadette Charehwa (right), LASS Trustee

## LASS STAFF MEMBERS UPDATE

Together with Celia Fisher we are the Sexual Health Promotion Team and we work with volunteers to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and to promote positive sexual health through information, stalls, displays, sessions, etc.

### Khadija Suleman

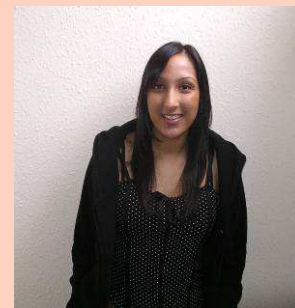
My main focus is raising awareness and to promote positive sexual health for HIV/AIDS and other STIs in different communities and also for People With Learning Disabilities. My findings after working with people from different backgrounds is that there is still stigma attached to HIV/AIDS and people living positively are still experiencing discrimination in the communities they live in. My experience proves that there is still a lot to be done if we are to win the war against HIV/AIDS. People are still ignorant about the basics of HIV and how it is transmitted



### Ravina Shemar

My focus is to provide sexual health information as well as delivering workshops to young people in different settings. My experience of working with young people has been very enjoyable. It has been amazing to see the different attitudes young people have towards 'safer sex' as well as their knowledge around sexual health. It has been very challenging to change young people's negative attitudes.

Ravina Shemar



### Direct Services Staff

#### Lucy Ball

When did you start at LASS?

September 2008

Job Title: Direct Services Advocacy Support Worker

I arrived at LASS as a third year social work student in spring time of 2008. I became a Direct Services Support Worker in September. Primarily I am involved in employment, helping people back into work and training. I am involved in developing the peer mentoring scheme. My job role varies from working and cooking for the drop in; Crisis intervention; in particular new mums and their babies; applications for cases to hardship funds; and working with Chipo on the women's group and some asylum signposting work.



#### Chipo Muteve

When did you start LASS: September 2008

Job Title: Direct Services Advocacy Support Worker

I am Chipo from Zimbabwe and have a background in teaching and now social work after completion of my Social Work Degree. I love working with people from disadvantaged groups to empower them. My passion is to bring difference to lives.

I am involved with men and women who are asylum seekers and refugees

One of the aspects of the job role that I enjoy is working within a women's group such as the sewing group. The sewing group helps women to develop skills and interact with one another socially. This has developed into a bigger project such as women who are apart of the group have applied to study textiles and design at a local college.



#### Matt Tomlin

'My name is Matt and I started working at LASS at the end of September 2008. I am 3<sup>rd</sup> year student at De Montfort University studying Youth and Community Development and I am completing my final year placement here at LASS. My main role at LASS is to work with young people and I am currently setting up a group for young people between the ages of 14 and 19 who are HIV positive, I am also currently setting up a DVD project which will give these young people a chance to share their experiences of living with HIV. Outside of this young people's work, I also work with service users in drop-in and through other activities. I have really enjoyed my work at LASS so far and am passionate to see service users empowered within their lives as they live with HIV and the issues that this may mean they have to face.'



Matt (left) LASS Open Day Lucky Dip

## LASS DIARY DATES AND OTHER INFORMATION

**INTERNSHIP:** Office and press assistant with good English communication skills and good knowledge of computers (preferably MAC)

**LOCATION:** Antwerpen / Belgium

**DURATION:** 6 months - 1 year

**TYPE OF POSITION:** INTERNSHIP

**COMPANY:** DESIGNERS AGAINST AIDS

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Ninette Murk/ Javier Barcala  
Bredabaan 260 2170 Merksem  
Antwerpen (Belgium)  
+ 0032 32 373382  
info@designersagainstaids.com

**FINAL DATE OF APPLICATION:**  
15/02/2009

**URL:** <http://www.designersagainstaids.com>

### Diary Dates

**12th February, STIs, Blood Borne Viruses and HIV training, 1pm—5pm**

**12th February, Volunteers Meeting 2-4pm or 6-8pm**

**25th February, Ghana and HIV, 1-2pm or 5.30pm—6.30pm**

**(light refreshments provided)**

**26th February, HIV, Stigma and Discrimination training, 1pm—5pm**

**9th March, HIV, Asylum and Immigration training, 1pm—5pm**

**19th March, Health and Sexuality training, 9am—1pm (full)**

**25th March, Launch of LASS DVD at The Guildhall Museum**

**(contact us for details and bookings)**

### Aspects of Love

Leicester Symphony Orchestra  
Guest Conductor: Roland Melia  
Saturday 14 February 2009, 7.30pm  
De Montfort Hall  
Valentine's Day Concert  
Full Price £15/£12.50/£10

Children £3

Disabled people 2 for price of 1

**10% of tickets sales booked through**

**LASS will go to LASS**

**Contact Melissa 0116 255 9995**

**To order your tickets by 6th Feb.**

### Be a part of NHS Leicester City

You can be a part of NHS Leicester City through our new membership scheme.

The NHS Leicester City Membership has been established to enable people from all sections of the community to participate in the development of services

**The main aims of the NHS Leicester City Membership are:**

To develop two-way communication between NHS Leicester City, and the community.

To keep members informed of developments in health which are of particular interest to them.

To recognise and value the knowledge and experience of Leicester residents and NHS staff.

To serve as a forum for dialogue about the way in which your local NHS does its work.

Any member of the public living or working in the area covered by NHS Leicester City can become a member.

### By joining NHS Leicester City you'll get:

The chance to have your say and influence healthcare in your community; for example GPs, chemists, dentists and midwives

Our quarterly newsletter with all the latest health news

Regular updates on your special areas of interest

NHS discounts and entrance into the members quarterly prize draw

Invitations to special events, including an annual members party

Email [getinvolved@leicester.nhs.uk](mailto:getinvolved@leicester.nhs.uk) with your details and we will send you an information pack, or call us on 0116 295 4183

### Straight Partners Anonymous (SPA)

Is a support group for straight people whose partners are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. SPA is based in the UK. It's anonymous in that group members may share as much, or as little, of their identity or personal circumstances as they wish.

SPA's purpose is to bring together straight people whose relationship with their gay or lesbian partner is in crisis. We exist to support and help each other.

<http://www.straightpartnersanonymous.co.uk>

**GENIE is organising a free hands on workshop around genetics and health on the 10th of February 2009 from 6pm to 9pm at the University of Leicester. To obtain further information, ring Jenny on (0116) 2523319.**

### Get your personal finances checked and help LASS

For a lot of people, life insurance, pensions and personal investments are something that they leave until they "get around to it", which usually means ignoring the issues and hoping they will go away. For those without wills or same sex couples, not in a civil partnership, this can be a disaster if someone suffers a premature death.

Jeremy Edwards, the recently retired Treasurer of LASS, is an IFA and has offered to pay 10% of any commission or fees earned from service users, volunteers, friends and family or Friends of LASS to LASS as a thank you for the introduction. This would be from the share received by him or his company and would not affect the advice given or costs directly or indirectly incurred by the client. Ring:0116 253 5600

Jeremy offers an initial consultation at no obligation and will explain how any advice is paid for before any work is undertaken. Examples of suitable advice he can give include:-

Wills and Estate planning for client, spouse or civil partner

Pension provision for client, spouse or civil partner

Tax efficient investments

**Bankfield**  
Independent Financial Advisers