Dear Colleague

PLANNING FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CHLAMYDIA TESTING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

I am writing to advise you of the arrangements the Department are putting in place to plan for the introduction of a Chlamydia Testing Policy in mid 2009. Genital Chlamydia Trachomatis Infection is the most commonly diagnosed bacterial sexually transmitted infection in Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics across the United Kingdom. Chlamydia testing/screening programmes have been developed in other parts of the UK over the last number of years and are currently being rolled out across the UK.
A Regional Steering Group has been looking at the issues around Chlamydia testing in Northern Ireland including the feasibility of introducing Chlamydia testing programme in Northern Ireland. I am pleased to inform you that we are committed to introducing such a programme and of the current work programme as follows:

1. A Regional Chlamydia Testing Steering Group chaired by Dr Lorraine Doherty, Consultant Epidemiologist/Senior Medical Officer, from this Department will oversee the development of definitive policy and the Chlamydia testing programme.

2. A Project Implementation Group which is a subgroup of the Regional Steering Committee will be chaired by Dr Tracey Owen, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Southern Health and Social Services Board, and will develop the operational approaches to Chlamydia testing over the coming months.

Chlamydia Testing Programme in Northern Ireland (CTPNI)

The CTPNI will offer opportunistic screening for Genital Chlamydia to sexually active men and women, aged under 25 years, in a variety of settings in Northern Ireland. It is anticipated that CTPNI will be introduced on a phased basis thus allowing for management growth of the overall programme.

The Regional Steering Committee have been undertaking a programme of work to look at the different settings within which Chlamydia testing might be delivered and this has included a number of feasibility studies. The results of all this work will be used to develop the operational arrangements for the testing programme. In this regard I would ask you to make key stakeholders within your organisations aware of the proposals to develop a testing programme and to co-operate fully with the development for same. We will be issuing further guidance on this programme once the Project Support Group have developed arrangements for implementation.

Yours sincerely

DR M McBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer
Cc Mr Norman Morrow
    Mr Martin Bradley
    Dr L Mitchell
    Mr A Elliott
    Dr L Doherty
    Dr N Chada
    Mr G Collins
    Mr S Camplisson
    Ms K Simpson
    Ms J Moore

This letter is available at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk and also on the DHSSPS Extranet which can be accessed directly at http://extranet.dhsspsni.gov.uk or by going through the HPSS Web at http://www.n-i.nhs.uk and clicking on DHSSPS.