

North Devon Conservatives

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HIV figures show Government has failed to prioritise public health: Philip Milton

A CAMPAIGNER has accused the Government of failing to prioritise public health after new figures showed the number of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the South West have soared by almost 70 per cent in the last 10 years.

Philip Milton made the claim after figures released by the Health Protection Agency showed the number of people living with STIs in the region had risen to more than 45,000 in 2007 – a rise of 67 per cent compared to 1998.

The latest figures show the number of people living with STIs in the South West has risen from 27,494 in 1998 to 45,989 in 2008. The total number of people with STIs in that period was 376,016.

Nationally, the figures show a rise from 389,826 to 658,534 in the same period – a rise of 69 per cent. The figures released by the Health Protection Agency also show a record 77,400 people in the UK are living with HIV.

In response Philip, the Conservative Prospective MP for North Devon said: “The fact there has been a 67 per cent increase in STIs in the South West alone is a huge concern.

“These figures are another example of why we in the Conservative Party think it is so important to commit to prioritise public health spending, so that short-term pressures do not compromise the health of the nation in the long-term.

“This is not just HIV, it is infertility and other connected conditions, many of which will endure for life.”

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Responding to figures released by the Health Protection Agency which show a record 77,400 people in the UK are living with HIV, Shadow Health Minister Anne Milton, said: "These figures are of huge concern. They are indicative of a generation that was not exposed to the effective tombstone campaigns of the late 1980s. It is deeply worrying that over a quarter of people are unaware of their infection."

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Notes for editors

The HPA report can be found here:

http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1227515310331?p=1204186170287

Soaring cost of STIs under Labour.

Cases of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have soared by 69 per cent since 1998. Ten years ago there were just 400,000 cases per annum; now there are nearly 700,000. New analysis by the Conservatives shows that treating these infections has cost the NHS £1.6 billion since 1998.

Cost of STIs broken down by region

The table below shows the number of cases of STIs in each region in England in each year since 1998, the percentage increase in cases and the total cost to the NHS of treating these infections. The cost has been calculated using the Payment by Results tariff (the outpatient GUM clinic tariff, code 360). The Payment by Results tariffs can be found at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/Financeandplanning/NHSFinancialReforms/DH_081226

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
UK						
389,826	415,636	447,881	478,368	510,162	546,297	
580,967						
England						
350,450	373,144	404,211	432,852	463,069	496,857	
525,864						

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South West					
27,494	29,667	32,861	35,038	37,894	38,447
40,809					

2005	2006	2007	Total	Percentage increase	Total Cost
UK					
606,462	620,285	658,534	5,254,418	69%	
1,592,088,654					
England					
547,007	557,489	593,992	4,744,935	69%	
1,437,715,305					
South West					
43,436	44,381	45,989	376,016	67%	113,932,848

Region Cost in 1998 Cost in 2007

UK	118,117,278	199,535,802
England	106,186,350	179,979,576
South West	8,330,682	13,934,667

Source: Health Protection Agency, Sexually transmitted infections diagnosed in GUM clinics in 2007, 15 July 2008

Labour's failure on public health

- Public Health Given Low Priority. Gordon Brown's independent reviewer of the NHS, Sir Derek Wanless, said recently that it is 'indicative of the relatively low priority given to public health that, while non-public health medical staff numbers have increased by nearly 60 per cent since 1997, the number of public health consultants and registrars has gone down overall' (The King's Fund, Our Future Health Secured?, September 2007).
- Raiding of public health budgets under Gordon Brown 'unacceptable'. The Health Select Committee said in the conclusions of its inquiry into NHS Deficits: 'Soft targets such as mental health and public health services have also suffered as has funding for voluntary organisations. We believe this to be unacceptable' (NHS Deficits, 13 December 2006).

Labour's failure on Chlamydia screening

As a result of the growing number of young people infected with Chlamydia, the Department of Health established the National Chlamydia Screening Programme. It is believed that almost 1 in 10 sexually active youngsters are infected with Chlamydia (Health Protection Agency, New frontiers - National

Chlamydia Screening Programme 2005-06, November 2006; available here:
http://www.hpa.org.uk/publications/2006/ncsp/NCSP_annual_report.pdf).

The Government set a Public Services Agreement target (PSA11d) in March 2005, calling on the NHS to increase the number of 15-24 year olds accepting Chlamydia screening (Department of Health, Delivering Choosing Health: making healthier choices easier, 9 March 2005; available here:
http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4105713.pdf).

On 29 October 2007, Public Health Minister Dawn Primarolo explained that:

"All primary care trusts are expected to screen 15 per cent of the target population between April 2007 and March 2008."

Source: Hansard. 29 October 2007, Col. 997WA; available here:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm071029/text/71029w0087.htm#07103119003413>.

However, latest show that, in fact, just 4.9% of the 15-24 year old population was screened – not 15%:

Region	Number of 15-24 Year old screened who been 15% met	Percentage of 15-24 year old population Screened	Number of year olds would have Screened in Addition if Target was
South West	26,378	4.2	93,395
ENGLAND TOTAL	319,008	4.9	985,481

Source: Health Protection Agency, National Chlamydia Screening Programme data tables, 6 June 2008; available here:
http://www.chlamydia-screening.nhs.uk/ps/data/LDP_data.html.

Even the 15 per cent target for Chlamydia screening is relatively modest, compared to the Department of Health's ultimate aim for PCTs to "work towards screening 50% of sexually active young people for Chlamydia annually" (Department of Health, Government's response to the Health Select Committee's Third Report of session 2004-05, 20 July 2005; available here:
http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dID=21202&Rendition=Web).

The Conservative approach to public health

On 16 March 2007, we announced the legislative side of our public health strategy to make prevention a priority:

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- A strengthened Chief Medical Officer's department, made more independent of ministers. The Department would advise the Secretary of State for Health, who would be responsible (rather than a junior minister, as now) for public health, on the steps he or she would need to take to tackle today's epidemics of obesity, alcohol abuse and sexually-transmitted disease.
 - A robust public health infrastructure, which would see local Directors of Public Health – jointly appointed by PCTs and local authorities – determine how funding for public health services would be spent. These Directors of Public Health would be better placed to make effective interventions across the health, local government, education and social housing sectors.
 - Independent public health budgets. At present, budgets for public health interventions are largely channelled through PCTs. With PCTs either in deficit or being asked to support hospitals in deficit, most of these budgets have been raided. Over time, these budgets should be taken from PCTs and spent through our new public health structure, rather than through traditional NHS bodies whose focus is on acute and community services.
- Responsibility deal with business
- Earlier this year, the Conservative Party set out the concept of a 'Responsibility Deal' – of how, instead of the constant and escalating resort to legislation and regulation and public sector intervention, we should instead enter into a non-bureaucratic partnership with the business community, together to tackle key challenges in society.

On Wednesday 27 August, Shadow Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley launched the Conservative Party's plans for a responsibility deal with business on public health. He invited Dave Lewis, Chairman of Unilever UK, to chair a working group of business representatives, voluntary groups and experts. Our proposals for the responsibility deal include: supporting EU proposals for a mandatory GDA-based front of pack food labelling; Industry-led reformulation initiatives and reduction of portion sizes; proportionate regulation on advertising and positive campaigns from the industry and government to promote better diets; a responsible drinking campaign matched by community action projects to address drug abuse, STIs and alcohol abuse, using a proportion of drinks industry advertising budgets and supported by the Government; and incentives and a local structure, through business organisations, for SMEs to improve the health of their employees, working with business organisations, "NHS Plus" and the Fitness Industry Association.