

## **Feedback gained from CHAPS-funded Sigma Research Seminars 2009-2010**

Sigma Research undertook two different research seminars (one on the theme of stigma, and one on responsibility) across six different cities in England in 2009/10. The aim of the seminars was to offer those who work with and influence the sexual health of homosexually active men an opportunity to consider and discuss a number of detailed themes emerging within recent basic research projects undertaken by Sigma on behalf of CHAPS. All those who registered to attend one or both of the Sigma Research Seminars (n=148, although some did not attend the actual events) were given the opportunity to complete a brief online feedback survey about the events. The online survey was live for several weeks in the spring of 2010, and a total of 39 individuals who had attended the seminars responded. Most of those responding to the feedback questionnaire (n=23) attended only the second seminar in the series on responsibility, with a smaller proportion having attended only the first seminar on stigma (n=8), or both seminars (n=8). What follows is a brief overview of their responses.

### ***Work areas and job roles***

Among those who responded, the largest proportion (n=11) undertake their work in London (or they undertake national work from a London base). However, the majority of responses were from those working outside of London, reflecting the fact that the seminars were purposively located in a range of Strategic Health Authorities across England.

When asked about their job role, the vast majority of respondents said their work involved health promotion (n=30). Other common roles included counsellor/therapist (n=7), policy development (n=5), provision of clinical sexual health services (n=4), and service commissioning (n=4).

### ***Meeting participants' needs***

Respondents were asked about their agreement with a number of statements about what they may have gained from the seminars.

*When asked:*

I learned things that were new to me	<b>85% agreed</b>
I have increased my ability to think critically about my own work	<b>77% agreed</b>
I have been inspired to consider different approaches in my work	<b>69% agreed</b>

### ***Seminar strengths***

The seminars were overwhelmingly popular with almost all who provided feedback. When asked an open-ended question about the benefits of attending, just as many people said they valued the accessible ways in which they acquired new information (n=21), as well as appreciating the opportunity to discuss, debate and share responses to that information with colleagues (n=21).

*They are informative, thought-provoking and energising.*

Some respondents appreciated having the space to reflect upon and assimilate theoretical concepts (n=12), and many mentioned that the seminars helped them to better apply research findings within their day-to-day practical roles (n=12).

*Sigma keep me at the forefront of what research is taking place, and they give me a chance to have my say on Gay and Bisexual men's issues and talk to other agencies on their views.*

### **Learning for the future**

When asked how the seminars could be improved, just over half of respondents contributed constructive comments. The majority of these focused on the need to better balance the content of the seminars. It was felt that the events could have benefitted from slightly less intensive information-giving from the facilitators (n=8), which would ultimately give more time over for participants to interact with one another (n=8).

*It seemed to fly by, so possibly more time. The structure was good but a bit talk heavy. The group work was great, but it was there that it felt there was not enough time.*

Others mentioned that they would have gained more if there had been a more diverse mix of people in attendance (from different agencies and job roles across the HIV and sexual health sector) at future seminars (n=4).

*More people could have attended, so that a greater diversity of people and organisations could have got together to share ideas, and developed stronger networking for the benefit of all the clients we all see.*

When asked if they would attend a similar event in the future, only one person said they did not think they would attend, and that was because Sigma's work is too far removed from their current job role. Overall, we have learned that the seminar interventions are beneficial to attendees, and will be even more so if we can provide a better balance of interaction and information-giving.