

# HIV IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY



May 2023

# About Fast-Track Cities

The Fast-Track Cities initiative is a global partnership between cities and municipalities around the world and four core partners – the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the City of Paris.

Mayors and other city/municipal officials designate their cities as Fast-Track Cities by signing the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities, which outlines a set of commitments to achieve the initiative's objectives. Initially heavily focused on the 90-90-90 targets, the Paris Declaration was recently updated to establish attainment of the three 90 targets as the starting point on a trajectory towards getting to zero new HIV infections and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Grounded in the principle of data transparency, the initiative includes a Fast-Track Cities Global Web Portal that allows cities to report on their progress against the fast-track and other targets.

- As the initiative's primary technical partner, IAPAC supports Fast-Track Cities with: technical assistance to local health departments on data generation, monitoring, and reporting
- Implementation planning among key local stakeholders, capacity-building support for clinical and service providers, community-based organisations, and affected communities
- Eliminating HIV-related stigma in healthcare settings and assessing quality of life among communities of people living with HIV.

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# FOREWORD



**Professor Jane Anderson**

Co-Chair of Fast-Track Cities London, Consultant Physician and Director of the Centre for the Study of Sexual Health and HIV, Homerton University Hospital



**Professor Kevin Fenton**

Co-Chair of Fast-Track Cities London, Regional Director, Public Health England London and Regional Director of Public Health, NHS London

The Fast-Track Cities London Improvement Collaborative is a fantastic initiative that has brought together community organisations, the NHS and partners across the city to find new approaches to tackling the many challenges faced when it comes to addressing the HIV epidemic in London.

It is an important partnership for London. It brings together individuals and organisations from many sectors that are committed to reducing HIV transmission, ending HIV deaths and tackling the stigma associated with HIV and the harm that it causes.

London has been a part of Fast-Track Cities for five years. We are now at an important stage where we reflect on the impact that has been achieved and how we continue to focus our efforts to completely eradicate new transmissions for London and nationally by 2030. It is a goal we can achieve if we continue to learn from the experiences of this inspiring community that is working everyday to improve the lives of people who are living with HIV.

The opportunities provided by the Fast-Track Cities London Improvement Collaborative made it possible to explore better ways to engage communities, better ways to partner with clinicians and community organisations. It has helped us grow our shared understanding of the social issues that people living with HIV can face, such as economic difficulties, so that we can develop new fit-for-purpose approaches to address them,

We have learned about how we use data and information more effectively. And we are learning about aging with HIV and providing different and new social spaces to tackle stigma and discrimination and support more people to live well as they age with HIV.

As we complete this phase of the HIV collaborative projects, we are excited to have this opportunity to share the innovation and impact that this work has made. We have seen how it changes lives and will continue to build on and share these lessons across London and beyond so that together we can end HIV transmission.

**I've worked for the NHS and for the voluntary sector in HIV for 20 years and I've never seen partnership working like we've had the past two years. More to be done of course but it's a great start for all our Fast-Track Cities partners.**

**Garry, Positively UK**



# INTRODUCTION

**Fast-Track Cities London is a partnership between the NHS, London Councils, third sector, public health, the Mayor of London and people living with HIV. It is part of the global Fast-Track Cities movement to end HIV by 2030.**

London is already leading the way in diagnosis and treatment and is now aiming to be the first city in the world to end new cases of HIV.

In 2020, we launched a HIV improvement community that consists of 13 initiatives between nine NHS hospital trusts and 22 voluntary and community organisations.

London's HIV improvement community is working towards the shared ambition of "Getting London to zero": ending new cases of HIV; preventing unnecessary deaths; and ending HIV stigma and discrimination.

The improvement community works as a learning network, using Quality Improvement methodology, training and evaluation, to share their skills, information and experience.

HIV remains an important problem in London, with infections impacting Londoners more than people living in any other part of the UK.

In 2020, there were 1,510 new cases of HIV, with an estimated 39,630 people living with HIV in London – almost 40 per cent of all those in the UK. Over the past 10 years, London has seen a significant fall in people newly diagnosed HIV positive, particularly men who have sex with men.

The extent of the decrease has been shown to vary across local areas and demographic populations. It is neither uniform across all population groups nor in all areas of the city, and rates of late diagnosis, remain stubbornly high at 38 per cent.

Late diagnosis significantly impacts people who are disproportionately affected by HIV like African, Caribbean and migrant women, trans women, gay men living with HIV who are also migrants, men of colour and men for whom English is not a first language.

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**London aims to be the first global city to get to zero new HIV infections, zero preventable deaths, zero stigma and discrimination, and have the best health and quality of life for people living with HIV.**

HIV services are excellent in London, but in order to get to zero it takes doing things differently. In particular, London needs to fully embrace the success and expertise of its HIV voluntary sector and people living with HIV.

In January 2020, London launched its HIV improvement community projects by awarding grants from Fast-Track Cities' HIV improvement fund. The fund, which began in October 2019, offered grants to tackle three key objectives:

- ✦ Increasing HIV testing
- ✦ Ensuring more people with HIV stay on treatment
- ✦ Supporting more people with HIV to live well.



The fund was provided by NHS England London and ensured a £3 million investment over three years. Projects were chosen that could level-up the playing field with community organisations that were providing care and support for people with HIV care in areas with greater levels of need.

The projects operate through 13 partnerships between clinics in nine NHS hospital trusts and 22 voluntary organisations.

The successful projects support more complex, vulnerable and marginalised groups; immigrants, homeless people, those with addiction and substance use issues, people from black and minority ethnic populations, women, younger people, those who are socially isolated and various faith groups.

The voluntary organisations that lead these projects are supported by Fast-Track Cities London Leadership Group through:

- ✦ Training and evaluation
- ✦ Using a Quality Improvement methodology
- ✦ Ongoing sharing of skills, information and learning as an adaptive network
- ✦ Focus on the whole person and not simply on health conditions.



# Change, grow, live



**Led by Change Grow Live, the biggest drug and alcohol charity in the UK, with Lewisham and Greenwich HIV Services (Alexis and Trafalgar clinics), King's College Hospital, Guy's and St Thomas (Harrison Wing), Bart's NHS Trust; Mortimer Market, Royal Free and other HIV clinics across London.**

Life can be chaotic for someone having problems with drugs or alcohol (or both). If that person is also living with HIV, it makes managing their condition and staying on treatment particularly hard. Their health and quality of life ultimately suffers.

Change grow live aims to help people build a stable lifestyle and a stronger foundation for successfully managing their condition. Each person's situation is unique. Advisors in the team work closely with each individual to discover the issues that are preventing them from taking their medication.

Once they understand the challenges, together they create a plan that ensures the right support is in place. This usually means getting mental health support, and, depending on that person's life, help from other local services to manage their health successfully.

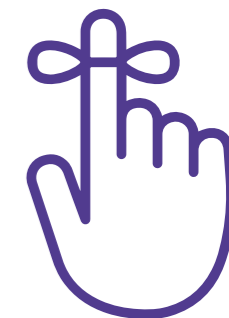
The team also works with HIV clinics to help its health professionals better understand the issues that may be impacting a patient's treatment. Workers from Change, Grow, Live attend multidisciplinary team meetings at the HIV clinic. There they take part in discussions and offer insight that helps plan for patients who may be having difficulties with drugs and alcohol.

HIV clinicians can also join in on advice sessions with Change, Grow, Live workers that helps them learn more about supporting people who are experiencing difficulties with drugs and alcohol and the kinds of approaches they can benefit from.

"I was amazed by how much I learnt just by listening to how they conducted their session - the questions that were asked, the information that they gave the person. It's helped me become more effective with my patients."

- Sarah Barber, HIV Clinician

There can be many battles to face when overcoming problems associated with drug and alcohol use. We make sure HIV is a top priority, for example by highlighting the importance of testing and ensuring the right support is available to help you stay well.



Team with lived experience



Training and development



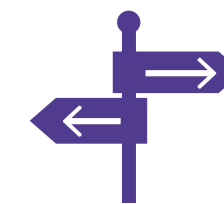
Toolkit for clinicians



Confidential advice



Referrals for other support



Signposting to other services

Working closely with

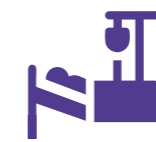
We aim to



Clinical teams



Outpatient services



Hospital wards



Prevent ill health and death



Increase viral suppression



Improve quality of life

People with an HIV status recorded increased from only **50%** up to **95%**



**100+**  
people supported



Today, we are supporting...

**70** people  
**92%** undetectable

“ We help provide insight into behaviour and approaches that will help improve attitudes towards seeking and receiving treatment and support, as well as reduce stigma. ”

# Connect well



**Led by Living Well, a not-for-profit organisation that helps people improve and maintain their physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, it involves London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust and various local voluntary sector partners.**

It is helping improve quality of life for people who are living with HIV. It does this by providing a range of online, one-to-one and group services for people who are living with HIV and experiencing loneliness and isolation.

Many people living with HIV find it hard to share their HIV status. They can feel alone, disconnected from family and friends and isolated within their local community. All of which impacts on their mental health and ability to live a full and healthy life.

Connect well offers a range of one-to-one and group wellbeing services, including counselling, life coaching and workshops that build confidence and focus on getting back to work.

It provides art and hypnotherapy and activities that reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness and helps people create new connections and a sense of community. The approaches vary, including community outreach, drop-in sessions and personal care planning, plus case work, coaching groups and workshops.

Many of the team are people who are living full lives with HIV. They are great role models that demonstrate what is possible and give people the advice and support they need to know they are not alone. It helps people who are living with HIV imagine their own healthy future and gives them confidence to build new relationships.

So far, the team has helped over 600 people. With more than 300 people receiving one-to-one advice and over 500 people taking part in group sessions that support their wellbeing.

*“Working in this flexible way, being able to adapt what we were doing, working together with other charities and Fast-Track Cities has made our projects so much better than the usual way of one pot of money for one specific project.”*

*– Simon, Living Well*



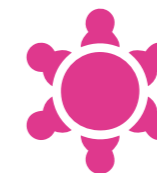
Team with lived experience



1-2-1 counselling



Life coaching



Workshops



Therapy



Drop-in sessions



Care planning



Creating connections



Building communities



Supportive relationships

Many people living with HIV find it hard to share their HIV status. They can feel alone, disconnected from family and friends and isolated within their local community. All of which impacts on their mental health and ability to live a full and healthy life.



Users of the service said:

**I feel... more confident** **87%**

**77%** more connected & less isolated

**48%** my physical health has improved

**53%** of service users are from... **black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds**



**600+**  
people supported

**300+**  
people

across **30**

London boroughs

**1-2-1 SESSIONS**

**550+**  
attendees

across **26**

London boroughs

**GROUP SUPPORT**

**2,500+**  
hours



**TOTAL HOURS**



**Loneliness, isolation and poor mental wellbeing can come hand-in-hand with a new diagnosis.**

**Building confidence and becoming open about living with HIV is hugely empowering.**





## Why look for more ways to improve quality of life?

The success of HIV antiretroviral therapy means that HIV is often now described by doctors, clinically, as a manageable condition. Yet for people living with HIV, they do not always experience their HIV in all its dimensions as manageable. They rate their health-related quality of life lower than the general population, particularly in relation to anxiety and depression, of which half report current symptoms, compared to under a third of the general population.

More than one in three people living with HIV have at some point been diagnosed with a mental health condition, significantly more than in the general population, most commonly depression or anxiety. Other conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, personality disorders, psychosis, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are much rarer but still at least twice as common in people with HIV. Trans people, men and people of white ethnicity are most likely to experience mental health problems.

The stigma associated with HIV affects the wellbeing of people living with HIV and can make them reluctant to tell people that they have the virus. One in eight has told no-one outside a healthcare setting of their HIV status and few tell people not close to them, such as co-workers or neighbours. The People Living with HIV Stigma Survey in 2015 found that more than three times as many people of Black or other minority ethnicity (one in six) had not told anyone about their HIV compared to other people living with HIV. This non-disclosure can compound the social isolation and loneliness that people with HIV often experience.

### Psychosocial support to combat loneliness and improve quality of life

Fast-Track Cities London projects are working towards improving quality of the life for people living with HIV using a variety of psychosocial approaches that support better mental health and wellbeing including: one-to-one counselling and therapy, support groups, group workshops and life coaching.



**Jo has been using the life coaching services at Living Well – part of the Connect Well Project. She reached out for support when she began struggling with her mental wellbeing.**

“

I came across a leaflet for life coaching at the HIV clinic when I was at a really difficult point in my life. My relationship of 25 years had just ended and I was devastated. My children were growing up and leaving home and my career was struggling. A lot of things were going on and I was not in a good place.

I'd been living with HIV for 37 years and I'd begun to feel almost like I did in the 80s when I was first diagnosed. I was really scared about what was happening with my life and my future was feeling really bleak. So I grabbed the leaflet and called Living well and within days was talking face to face with a life coach via Zoom.

She was just amazing. She was sensitive and supportive and eased me into talking about myself and what I was going through. She helped me find my sense of self and sense of purpose. She helped me identify my skills and my value.

By doing the life coaching I was able to rebuild my confidence. Now I'm looking forward to the future and what the next day will bring.

”

# Doctors of the World



**Doctors of the World aims to increase HIV testing and treatment for people from migrant and other underserved populations. Everyone is also tested for sexually transmitted infections. It helps tackle stigma and provides testing environments where people feel safe.**

Refugees, people seeking asylum and people who have migrated to the UK, often feel excluded from healthcare and have trouble accessing HIV tests. An individual's immigration status can impact whether they access HIV tests and treatment. Language barriers, access, knowledge, stigma and fear of immigration enforcement are among the main reasons migrant communities do not access sexual health services.

*“We need to stop just talking about HIV testing and HIV treatment. HIV has moved on now from 20 years ago, it's bottom of a long list of issues. It's now about people ageing with HIV, it's about stigma and discrimination and it's about social issues and inequalities. That's what we need to talk about.”*

– Michelle, Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World helps remove barriers to testing and treatment by being available at their permanent East London clinic. People feel safe there and can access advice and support in their first language, regardless of their immigration status. Working in partnership with the HIV support community and migrant support community it reaches out to populations and offer drop-in sessions.

Everyone who is tested for HIV is also tested for sexually transmitted infections. From 2021-22, Doctors of the World provided HIV testing to over 150 people from migrant populations by visiting Home Office initial accommodation sites, conducting outreach into communities and everyone who attended Doctors of the World's East London clinic. Around 77% of people tested had never been tested in the UK.

The work so far has included supporting people with more complex situations which affect their sexual health, including transwomen accessing services, people experiencing reproductive issues or poor mental health. Doctors of the World aims to support people who have trouble accessing HIV testing by providing a safe environment that offers translated and person centred healthcare services.



Team with lived experience



Rapid testing



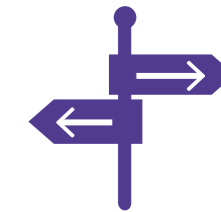
Sexual health advice



Free condoms



Referrals for support



Signposting to other services



Permanent clinic



Drop-in sessions



Clinics that reach out

Migrants and refugees often feel excluded from healthcare and have trouble accessing HIV tests. Fear of arrest as a result of immigration status continues to contribute to the poor health and wellbeing of migrants and refugees in the UK.

Of people we tested



**92%** had never heard of PrEP or PEP

**87%** did not know where their local sexual health clinic was located

**77%** had never been tested for HIV in the UK

**100%** identified as migrants and had no recourse to public funds



**150**  
people tested

across multiple locations, including



Clinic



Community Organisations



Initial accommodations

**“ We can overcome multiple barriers as a trusted migrant service, by providing safe, translated services that do not compromise the safety of service users and instead centres on them. ”**



# Faithworks



**Led by NAZ, a BAME-led sexual health agency working to address sexual health inequalities in BAME communities, it involves the Africa Advocacy Foundation and the Jewish Aids Trust.**

It does this by working with faith leaders to engage them in meaningful conversations about HIV and sexual health. It wants religious leaders to have confidence talking with their communities about HIV, to help reduce the stigma associated with HIV and normalise testing.

Faith leaders have a huge amount of trust and respect within their communities. This project recognises the potential they have to increase awareness and understanding, as well as changing attitudes. It aims to help faith leaders, and those newly in training of all religions, develop skills to be able to provide pastoral and health support for people living with HIV, as well as being a voice in their community to help spread messages about prevention and testing.

**“We know faith leaders can do a lot towards fighting HIV stigma and improving the lives of people who have HIV and would value their support. We want them to change the way they address sexual health issues within their community and we’re giving them the tools to change attitudes and promote positive health messages.” – Rachel, Faithworks**

It has been running information sessions with faith leaders, and wherever possible their congregations, to improve their understanding of what it means to live with HIV and tackle some of the topics people traditionally feel uncomfortable talking about. The team has also taken the opportunity to conduct testing in faith settings.

So far, Faithworks has reached over 3,000 people from various faith congregations. Testing in faith settings has found two people who did not know they were living with HIV, and one person who had disengaged with their care. All are now receiving treatment and support.



Workshops for faith leaders



Educational materials



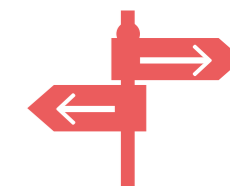
Information sessions



Testing sessions



Social media kits



Signposting to other services

Working closely with faith groups



Christian



Islamic



Jewish

Religious leaders have a unique and important role in supporting the wellbeing of people with HIV and fighting stigma. Because of their well-established and trusted relationships with communities, religious leaders can influence the lives of the people they serve and promote positive health messages.



AROUND **30%**

of people who attend an information session choose to get tested on the spot



100+ faith leaders engaged



80+ engagement events



3000+ people attended



200+ people tested



30+ Workshops for faith leaders

Workshops for faith leaders



30+ Follow-up sessions requested

Follow-up sessions requested



50+ Community information sessions

Community information sessions



50+ Testing sessions

Testing sessions



**There is still a lot of resistance to discussing HIV within faith organisations. We’re empowering faith leaders to talk openly about HIV and help make talking about HIV and getting tested part of normal life**



# Growing older and wiser



**A collaboration between Sophia Forum, Positively UK, NAM and UCL to develop a holistic programme supporting women aged over 40 who are living with HIV with their health, wellbeing and social care needs.**

Designed for and by women who are over 40 and living with HIV, this project is recognised as the first of its kind worldwide. It trains women peer mentors and aims to grow the knowledge-base around supporting women who are aging with HIV.

Advances in antiretroviral therapy mean the number of women living with HIV aged over 50 has tripled in the past 10 years. In the UK, they account for over a quarter of those living with HIV. As they age, they face challenges including menopausal symptoms, higher risk of conditions that weaken their bones (osteoporosis and osteopenia), and affect their heart (cardiovascular disease). For those who may already be affected by long-term HIV medication, the challenges could be even greater.

Four focus groups were held with 19 women aged over 40 and living with HIV, to learn more and collect relevant data about their experiences and health needs. This insight, together with analysis of data from two large studies with older women living with HIV, informed a policy report with recommendations for supporting the needs of women who are growing older with HIV. This publication is now an advocacy tool, helping give voice to their needs so that the right services are available and they are supported to live long, healthy lives.

There are now 10 active GROWS mentors supporting referrals from HIV clinics with 23 referrals to date. Mentors support other women as they age with HIV and will also deliver the training course. Three women have completed the Level 3 in Education and Learning National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). As well as providing peer-led support, 12 videos were created, through NAM aidsmap, sharing women's experiences and vision for future care. As well as developing networks and spaces to help improve outcomes for all women with HIV. Our two project leads were trained in peer research skills.

On International Women's day on March 8th 2023 women who have taken part in the training programme joined us to share their learning, experiences and successes of the pilot and their ongoing need.

**“Through the focus groups and research we’ve undertaken, we now have much greater insight into the needs of women. The networks created through Fast Track Cities also mean we are now collaborating much more effectively throughout the system, and that’s important because we want to use what we’ve learned to see real change happen” – Sophie, Growing Older and Wiser**



Team with lived experience



Peer mentoring training programme



Peer mentoring support



Resources specifically for HIV & ageing



Platform for advocacy & guidance



Advancing research



**Designed for and with women over 40 and living with HIV**

Over a quarter of people living with HIV in the UK are women who are over 50. It is very important that we understand and voice their needs so that the right services are available and they can live long, healthy lives.



New connections & community development



Supportive relationships



Personal & professional development



**Our service users say...**

I can't thank you enough for the vast knowledge that you have given me - I feel confident enough to talk about the subject. You were so loaded and prepared to train us. I would like to congratulate you too for delivering a successful training. Knowledge is power, I hope other women like me will benefit from the training you are going to deliver in future.



**12 videos**

**100,000 views**



**150+ women engaged**

**14 workshops and training sessions**

**37 new mentors and 22 new train the trainers**



**We're proud to be providing peer-led support, accurate and accessible information, and networks and spaces to help improve outcomes for all women growing older with HIV. Informed by research and led by women with lived experience of HIV, GROWS is a first of its kind model for a peer support programme specifically for women ageing with HIV.**





# HIV engagement mentor



**Led by METRO Charity, a voluntary sector organisation that wants to see diversity celebrated, difference respected and valued, and where optimum health and wellbeing for all is a collective goal. It involves King's College Hospital NHS Trust and Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust.**

The HIV engagement mentor aims to support people living with HIV who are struggling to engage with healthcare and are therefore having difficulty maintaining their treatment and health.

It does this by working in partnership with King's College Hospital NHS Trust and Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Trust and closely with the individual to develop a holistic plan that suits the specific needs of each person.

**"It's made a massive difference to our patients, our department and the service we offer. The people we see can have very complex issues that impact on their ability to come to the clinic or take their medication - such as homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, immigration. It's brilliant to be able to refer them to the peer mentor who can take the time to talk whatever those issues may be and help steer them towards the people and the services who can genuinely help them." - Dr Goli, HIV clinician**

Each individual's plan is unique. It is developed in partnership so that it can address the very complex needs of each person, which might include things like homelessness, mental health, recreational drug and alcohol use, and anything else that could impair their ability to engage with healthcare providers and treatment.

When the programme set out, its goal was to ensure that 60% of people taking part had an undetectable viral load. Currently, 85% of people participating in the mentoring programme are achieving an undetectable viral load.

HIV Engagement Mentor is helping more people stay on their treatment plan, improving their quality of life and wellbeing. By working together to overcome the issues each person is having, they help get them back on track with their everyday health, prevent AIDS-related illnesses, and ensure HIV is undetectable for them and can't be passed on.



Team with lived experience



Clinical mentor partnership



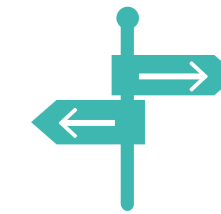
Tailored support plans



Structured sessions



Referrals for other support



Signposting to other services

Focusing on people with complex needs



Vertical transmission



Men who sleep with men

The most vulnerable people who are living with HIV have such challenging lives that they are unable to engage with effective HIV medication and care. We work in partnership to provide holistic support and empower the most complex patients to increase their chances of a longer, healthier life.



African-Caribbean background



Drug and alcohol use



Experiencing homelessness



Mental health

We've also provided one-off advice and support to **32 non-eligible patients**



**Over 60 referrals and 200 people signposted to relevant services**



**100+**  
people supported



**4** referrals per month



**400+**  
Structured sessions



**85%**  
have achieved an undetectable viral load



**Many people don't know how to ask for help, so to have someone who comes without asking, just to say that help is at hand, is quite valuable.**



# In-clinic peer support



**Led by Positively UK, a national organisation that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV through tailored peer support, in partnership with Plushealth, NAZ Project and Chelsea & Westminster NHS Foundation Trust.**

Chelsea & Westminster NHS Foundation Trust refers patients who have been newly diagnosed with HIV to the peer support team, who contact each person within a week of their diagnosis.

As the peer support team all live with HIV, they can empathise and share their own experiences. They are available to offer advice, support, sign posting and referrals to additional support to help people adapt to life with HIV and maximise wellbeing.

Having a positive experience of meeting someone living well with HIV in the early stages of a diagnosis can make a huge difference to an individual's adjustment to their diagnosis. It vastly improves the likelihood that they will properly engage in care and remain on treatment.

The peer support team works hand in hand with the healthcare team involved in an individual's care so that support needs can be identified and offered at every step along a person's HIV journey.

As well as newly diagnosed patients, the team also works with people who are experiencing difficulties or may have dropped out of touch with the service. They reach out to find out what problems they may be experiencing and work with the person to ensure they are getting the support they need to get them back on track with their HIV treatment and care.

“Peer support workers have made a huge difference to the care that we provide. They make it possible for us to focus more on a person's unique condition and the clinical treatment need, while they focus on what that person is going through, showing them how to cope because they've been through it themselves. We think it's because of them that we're seeing more patients staying in their care and on their treatment.”

– Christina, HIV Nurse at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital



Team with lived experience



1-2-1 support and advice



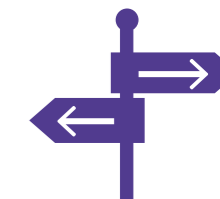
Workshops



Clinics that reach out



Referrals to case workers



Signposting to other services

Focusing on people experiencing challenges with their HIV diagnosis

People who...



are newly diagnosed



tell the health care professional about having difficulties



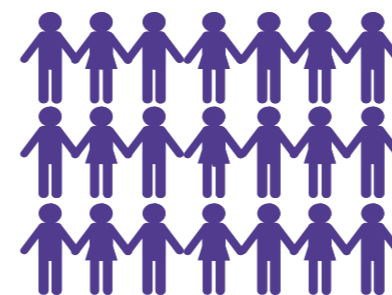
dropped out of care or are admitted to hospital

Many people feel frightened and alone when they learn they have HIV. HIV-related stigma can make seeking external support feel overwhelming. Having peer support accessible within the safe space of the clinic makes it easier for people to speak to someone who genuinely understands, from lived experience.



**12x**

Referrals have increased twelvefold due to integrated peer support pathways and inclusion in the multidisciplinary team



**287**  
people supported

**357**  
referrals

across **2** years

**66%**  
of referrals

Accessed support

**Switching from opt-in to opt-out peer support increased uptake of the service by newly diagnosed from 10 – 67%**

It is always a shock to learn you have HIV, and it's not easy to know what to do next. Seeing and talking with someone, right away, who is living well with HIV is hugely reassuring. It changes your perspective about what is possible.



## Why provide peer support?

Fast Track Cities London contracted with voluntary sector organisations whose trained staff with lived experience of HIV can provide a range of support including professional counselling, benefits advice, drugs and alcohol, diet and exercise and life coaching. They also link people into key services for additional support needs. The trained peer support workers provide structured sessions covering HIV knowledge, stigma, mental health, disclosure, relationships and adherence, amongst other pertinent topics.

Peer support is an essential part of effective, multi-disciplinary care for those living with HIV and other long-term conditions. Alongside the clinical input of healthcare professionals, the expertise, psychosocial support, empathy, knowledge and whole person care which peer support workers can provide, can lead to a crucial, empowering relationship with someone with shared experiences.

During 2022 the projects have provided one to one support to over 600 patients. Over 75% of patients contacted have taken up the service, including a doubling of the number of newly diagnosed patients accessing peer support in Chelsea and Westminster Foundation Trust. Guy's & St Thomas's Hospital, another clinic partnering in the peer support projects, set an initial target of 60% of patients with complex needs achieving viral suppression by end of project - they've already reached 85% of these patients being on effective medication and undetectable. One of the charities involved, Positively UK has also provided welfare benefits advice and secured more than £1m in benefits for patients living with HIV.

### Additional information on the three projects:

Metro, Positive East and Positively UK peer support staff have all become part of multidisciplinary teams at NHS Trusts working directly with the clinicians, taking part in ward rounds and discussing patients who may be at risk of dropping out of care for early intervention. They work with Guy's, Kings, St George's, Chelsea and Westminster, Barts, Homerton and Barking NHS Trusts.

Garry is Lead for Peer Learning & Partnerships at Positively UK and has lived with HIV for over 30 years. He runs a project at Positively UK which provides support to people who find out they have HIV through a blood test in A&E - Chelsea and Westminster Hospital Emergency Department testing pilot - as well as via clinics and during hospital stays.



Most people diagnosed from a visit to A&E are not expecting it. It tends to be people who don't think they're at risk, so what they know about HIV is out of date. They don't know much about what it means today to be living with HIV.

No matter how you're diagnosed, it is always a shock to learn you have HIV. Most people still think life is over - it certainly isn't, you can live well with HIV. The earlier you find out, the sooner you can get treatment and live a normal life. Medication makes the virus undetectable in your body so it can't be passed on. Ideally, HIV should be as undetectable in your life as it is in your body. We want people to be just living normal lives (with HIV).

Peer support is so important. Even with lots of health professionals saying, 'you'll be okay, medication works, you can live a normal life,' there's a lot to process and most people feel isolated and alone. Integrating peer support at an early stage, when someone is just finding out, means immediately seeing and talking with someone who is living well with HIV and has been right where you are now. It changes your perspective.

Positively UK works with many NHS services in London to provide peer support outreach to people who test positive for HIV through emergency departments and other testing routes. We provide one-to-one and group support for anyone living with HIV, train peer mentors for HIV clinics and organisations across the UK and provide ongoing learning opportunities to our national network of peer mentors.

We use different approaches in different services to support people living with HIV. Feeling alone and fearful of reaching out for help is awful, which can also mean people don't engage in care or take their medication. We make connections in the safe space of the clinic, providing information and support on how to stay healthy and live well.

It's asking a lot of someone newly diagnosed and who knows little about living with HIV to reach out to a support service. The stigma associated with HIV can be a huge barrier. Having a peer support worker based within the HIV clinic making that initial contact, or visiting the inpatient ward takes the pressure off. That connection removes that sense of isolation and makes it easier to get a handle on what you need to do next - it's a key way to ease the adjustment to diagnosis and treatment."



# Mobile HIV testing van



**Led by the GMI Partnership comprising of Metro, Positive East and Spectra. Collectively, it combines high quality HIV prevention and support services, with a pan London reach, delivered through a shared skill set and staff and volunteer base, that is firmly anchored in diverse communities.**

It uses a mobile HIV testing van to reach migrant and other marginalised communities, visiting high streets, multi-cultural markets and community events. Outreach staff encourage opportunistic, free HIV testing and distribute condoms to members of the public.

The project is also providing a unique opportunity to deliver key prevention messages and signpost to other sexual health services, providing people with the tools and information to help them remain negative. This approach normalises testing, challenges existing stigma and supports newly diagnosed people into care.

Many people mistrust traditional routes to testing for HIV. Together with a lack of knowledge around the primary care system that is available to them, and additional challenges for migrants and those without English as a first language, there are many people who may struggle to approach some venues for testing.

Using the van enables flexible working directly within the community. This approach makes HIV testing convenient and accessible for many more people. It is visible at community sites and part of day-to-day activity, which helps address stigma and inequities in accessing HIV and sexual health services, information and advice.

“Of the people we have spoken to from the Black and ethnic minorities, 87% of them had not heard of PrEP and PEP, and 93% had not heard of U=U. We’ve tested around 2500 people. Of those, 32% have told us they’ve never been tested for HIV.”

- Beth Hopson, GMI Partnership

- Easily accessible service
- Rapid testing
- Sexual health advice
- Free condoms
- Referrals for support
- Signposting to other services

- Welcoming atmosphere
- Easy conversations
- Early diagnosis

HIV still carries stigma for many people. New migrants and those with English as a second language can find it even more challenging. The mobile testing van takes HIV testing, information and support to communities to make sexual health a harmless part of day-to-day activity.

**180**   
**TOTAL SESSIONS**

**2500+**  **32%**  
**people tested** told us they've never been tested

 **69%** **people tested** from migrant and non-English speaking backgrounds

**87% of people say they have never heard of PrEP or PEP**

**“We’ve had thousands of conversations about HIV, prevention, risk reduction, safe sex and living with HIV. We are changing attitudes, reducing stigma, helping people get the treatment they need and stopping transmission.”**



# Patient support and retention



**Led by Positive East a charity that provides HIV support and prevention and testing services across East London. The project involves BHRUT (outpatients East), Barts NHS Trust and Homerton University Hospital and aims to increase referrals to peer support services.**

Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. Peer interventions form a part of a spectrum of wellbeing support that also includes counselling and psychology and practical support around housing and benefits. For someone who is living with HIV, getting real-life advice and support from someone who has faced similar challenges, can be the difference between downward spiralling health and wellbeing and a long life well lived.

“Experience tells us our peer support works, but first you need to get clinics to refer people in, and particularly those that are likely to need a bit more support to stay well. We’ve worked closely with local HIV clinics to design a pathway into peer support, we’ve joined the multidisciplinary teams to add valuable insight to help plan and respond to each individual’s need and developed a tool that clinics can use with patients to help identify the kinds of support they need.”

- Steve Worrall, Positive East

The team has been working closely with clinicians to come up with a standard way to identify people who are living with HIV and struggling to cope and would benefit from peer support services:

- Stage 1: Peer support services all have a named person that clinics can refer patients to
- Stage 2: Peer support workers have joined the multidisciplinary teams to help plan and respond to each individual’s need
- Stage 3: A screening tool called a wellbeing thermometer that clinic patients use to help identify the types of things that will help them

Once an individual has been referred they can benefit from a range of services designed to help people who are living with HIV overcome the everyday challenges they face. From counselling and support for building the confidence to talk to family and friends about their diagnosis, to help finding a suitable home or getting more financial support through benefits, peer support workers focus on a person’s whole situation and help solve the problems that can impact their health and treatment. This work has helped better integrate a well being approach into clinical services.

- Toolkit for clinicians
- Team with lived experience
- 1-2-1 peer support and counselling
- Confidential advice
- Tailored support plans
- Outreach at clinics
- Referrals for support

Focusing on people with unmet needs

- Over 50s
- BAME backgrounds
- Women
- Young adults

There are many reasons why someone falls out of touch with the service providing their HIV care. When it happens their wellbeing suffers, they can become seriously ill or die, and risk of onward HIV transmission becomes high.

**68%** increase in referrals by being members of the multidisciplinary team and using wellbeing thermometer

- 480+** people supported
- 130** people NEW TO THE ORGANISATION
- 65** people NEWLY DIAGNOSED
- 330+** improved financial outcomes
- 170+** improved housing outcomes
- 288** receiving emotional support
- PEER SUPPORT & COUNSELLING

“By focusing on wellbeing, patients also talk to us about their other health and support needs, which we might not have been aware of, and this helps people keep better engaged”

# Positive champions



**Led by NAM aidsmap, a UK charity that changes lives through independent, accurate and accessible information about HIV, in partnership with the Africa Advocacy Foundation, which empowers individuals to control their health and wellbeing through accurate information, advice and guidance.**

Positive Champions is helping to address health inequalities by empowering people from Black and minority ethnic communities share their personal stories, to tackle the false facts and inaccuracies that exist about HIV and increase HIV testing in black communities.

This project trains and supports people from a diverse range of African communities to talk about their experiences of what it means to be living with HIV and why testing and getting diagnosed early is so important, especially why people from Black communities should feel comfortable getting tested for HIV.

By sharing their experiences with their local community, these Positive Champions are helping to dispel the myths around HIV, normalising HIV as a topic of discussion, and encouraging more people to get tested.

Some positive champions were also featured in short, empowering videos in which they talk openly about living with HIV and encourage others to test. The videos were shared online, on aidsmap.com and across social media. Thirty videos have been broadcast in which different reasons to test for HIV are highlighted. These videos have been viewed over 100,000 times.

Positive Champions also helps facilitate on-the-spot HIV testing. They accompany testers when they set up in busy community areas in South East London and encourage people to have a chat and get tested. So far, over 3,000 people have been tested, and around 950 test kits have been distributed for people to test themselves.

**“We’ve tested 1000s of people from Black communities for HIV. We made eight new diagnoses and helped those people get treatment. All of them are now living normal lives with HIV and can’t pass it on”**

**– Susan Cole, Community Engagement and Marketing Manager, NAM**

There are too many false facts and inaccuracies about HIV. We train people to share the truth about HIV, encourage testing and speak up, especially about why it’s so important for people from African communities to test for HIV. It also offers on-the-spot testing in south east London.



Team with lived experience	Training for champions	Educational videos	Rapid testing	Sexual health advice	Signposting to other services

	<b>50+</b> champions trained		<b>30+</b> videos		<b>100,000</b> views
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	<b>8</b> people diagnosed & on treatment for HIV	
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	<b>950</b> test kits distributed ✓		<b>3,000</b> in-person tests
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**People living with HIV often feel nervous about telling others that they have HIV.**

**“ We share our stories about living with HIV to combat stigma and encourage more people to get tested.”**



## Why encourage more testing?

People diagnosed with HIV at a late stage of infection are more likely than those diagnosed early to suffer ill-health and premature death. Since people diagnosed late are likely to have unknowingly been living with HIV for at least three to five years, there is a risk of transmission to other people while they have been unaware of their status.

The number of people unaware they have HIV has been declining and is now estimated to be around 5 per cent of all people living with HIV in London – compared with 6 per cent across England. Diagnosing people sooner markedly improves the health of individuals who are living with HIV and prevents new infections. It also goes a long way towards reducing the significant health and social care costs that are associated with severe disease, emergency hospital admissions, inpatient care and rehabilitation.

Following concerted and ongoing efforts to reduce late HIV diagnosis, by expanding HIV testing, the proportion of new HIV diagnoses in London that were made late gradually decreased over several years to as low as 34 per cent in 2015. With combined ongoing efforts, the numbers are continuing to drop.

London has succeeded in reducing late diagnosis and undiagnosed HIV to below the national rates, but they remain higher among some population groups, notably black Africans and people of some other minority ethnicities, reflecting wider social inequalities.

### Additional information on the projects:

Faithworks, Doctors of World, Mobile HIV Testing Clinic, Positive Champions, and the Volt Project are all conducting HIV testing. By taking their teams into communities and having conversations about HIV and testing in environments where local people feel safe, they are helping more people to understand the risks of going untested and get tested. Together they are normalising HIV testing and reducing stigma. They are also reaching people who are particularly marginalised and may have the most difficulty accessing services – for example, people who are homeless with additional barriers to care and migrants who may not know they are can get treatment for HIV.



**Sara is 56 and lives in London. She is living with HIV and was diagnosed while being treated for another condition at St George's Hospital. By the time Sara was diagnosed her health had deteriorated and she was admitted to hospital in a critical condition.**

“

Sara has ulcerative colitis, a long-term condition, that she developed following a bout of food poisoning. When she attended the clinic for treatment her health had been so seriously affected that she was immediately admitted to hospital for life-saving treatment. As part of the admission process Sara was tested for HIV and hepatitis. Four days later, while still in hospital Sara was told she had HIV.

“Initially I was in shock, I didn't know how I was going to cope. I didn't know if I was going to die. It was really distressing.”

Sara phoned her GP and asked for advice. Her GP reassured her that everything would be OK.

“When I spoke with my GP, she right away told me that I would be fine. Treatment is simple – it is just one pill a day – it's a long-term condition that you can manage, it is nothing to be frightened of and it is not a death sentence.”

Sara had been experiencing health issues that were linked to having a weakened immune system, having HIV now made a lot of sense.

“I was so ill when I was diagnosed. I'd had food poisoning when I was travelling but when I got back home I still wasn't getting better. I had no reason to think I had HIV, I wouldn't have gone for a test, it didn't enter my mind. Even my GP said she never would have thought to give me an HIV test, but HIV is not selective, like all viruses, anyone can get it. If I hadn't been tested in hospital that day, I don't know what could have happened. It is frightening to think I might not have found out in time.”

Sara says she feels lucky she was automatically tested for HIV before it could cause more damage.

“Even if you think there is no way you could have HIV, why not just be tested and be sure? It's easily treated. It is just another long-term condition. It is better to know if you have HIV – with medication you can recover and you won't pass it on, that's really reassuring. The HIV clinic is excellent, nurses know you by name and are really kind and understanding too, you always see the same consultant. There is such a personal caring service all the way”

”

# Stay and play



**Led by METRO Charity, a voluntary sector organisation that wants to see diversity celebrated, difference respected and valued, and where optimum health and wellbeing for all is a collective goal, it also involves King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.**

It provides a service in the community, closer to home, where parents of young children and families of people living with HIV can access clinical care, while building up support from people who are going through similar experiences.

People who are living with HIV and raising young children often face extra challenges. Life can be very busy and stress higher. They may be the main care giver and feeling isolated at home. There is also a risk that someone will prioritise their own health lower as the needs of their family increases. This could mean disengaging in their care, not keeping up with their medication so their health suffers and becoming more socially isolated.

Stay and play makes it easy for parents to access their clinical care while still providing for the needs of their family. It makes it possible to bring children along to clinics and offers opportunities to socialise and meet people in the same circumstances.

*“Our patients say they are feeling more connected to each other and to their care. Clinicians come into the space and consult with the patients, so it’s a very different environment where parents feel very comfortable asking questions and getting advice about their care. The children have so much fun playing they don’t want to leave. It’s a very positive social experience.”*

*– Edith Ntabyera , Family Support and Advocacy Manager, Stay and Play*

It runs group sessions for parents – face-to-face support groups and wellbeing sessions – while their children play. It is a welcoming environment that creates positive experiences and builds support networks beyond clinical staff. It also improves the likelihood that the parent will remain engaged in their care and their health and overall wellbeing of their family will improve.

Since starting the Stay and Play groups in Dec 2020, the team have run 55 group sessions and supported more than 102 people. The last group session in February 2023 had the highest attendees with 26 children going for play activities and 11 parents (37 attendees in total).



Team with lived experience



1-2-1 support and advice



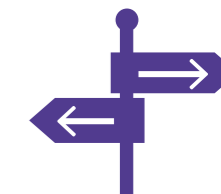
Workshops



Welfare advisor



Referrals to case workers



Signposting to other services



Creating connections



Building communities



Supportive relationships

Mothers with young children often feel isolated, struggle to stay on their treatment plans and can lose touch with services, especially those from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities.



**100% of women find the sessions useful and educational**

**Mothers in our social groups say...**

I feel more connected with people like me, it helps me break through the feelings of isolation



**102+**  
people supported



People who did not attend

People lost to follow up

**STARTED AT**

**30%**

**25%**

**NOW**

**10%**

**5%**



**We are helping more parents living with HIV connect with others who are also raising young children and living with HIV. They get the clinical support they need, and develop confidence to overcome feelings of guilt and stigma so they can live well.**





# Volt project



**Led by Africa Advocacy Foundation, a community-led initiative that aims to equip diaspora communities and marginalised people with the tools they need to find better health, safety, prosperity and opportunity to lead fulfilling and happy lives, it involves Waldron Sexual Health Centre.**

People experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable and isolated in our society, with the poorest health outcomes. Testing in homeless shelters is currently very low. For people who are new immigrants to the UK and struggle with English there can be more barriers to getting tested, such as fear that it will impact the safety of their residency.

The Volt project is aiming to increase testing for HIV and syphilis among people who are homeless and within immigrant communities.

It is training staff at homeless shelters so they are knowledgeable about HIV, feel confident talking about HIV – the risks, treatments and all the benefits of getting tested and knowing your HIV status – and also to be able to test the people who stay at the shelter.

*“Staff at shelters tell us they are now more confident talking with their clients about HIV, PrEP and PeP and what U equals U means. This is a huge change, it just wasn’t happening before we started this project.”*

– Edwin, Project Worker

It also works with groups in immigrant and refugee communities to tackle stigma. They talk openly about what it means to be living with HIV and help dispel some of the fears people have about accessing services. They encourage people to get tested and engage with healthcare providers.

Making HIV tests more accessible, beyond sexual health clinics, is helping to normalise testing. It is taking the fear out of testing, and making it easier to diagnose and treat more people sooner. Helping them get treatment, so they don’t develop serious illnesses.



Team with lived experience



Training for shelter staff



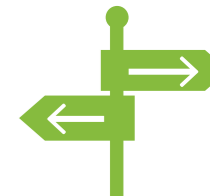
Rapid testing



Free condoms



Referrals for other support



Signposting to other services

Working closely with



Homeless shelters



Clinical teams



Outpatient services



Change attitudes to HIV testing in non-traditional settings



Prevent ill health and death



Improve quality of life

We aim to

**People experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable and isolated in our society, with the poorest health outcomes.**



**300+**  
people tested



**5** Shelters participating



**22** Shelter staff trained as HIV testers



**300+**  
HIV leaflets distributed

**By making it easy to get tested we can diagnose more people sooner, and help them get treatment, so they don’t develop serious illnesses, and it improves their quality of life.**

# Welfare project



**Led by Positively UK, a national organisation which aims to protect the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV by providing tailored peer support, promoting positive attitudes and equitable access to health for people living with HIV.**

Financial hardship and simply not having enough regular income has a big impact on whether someone can live well with HIV. If you do not have the basics for living, it is impossible to stick to a treatment plan, engage with care services and maintain your health.

For many people who are diagnosed early with HIV, medication works quickly and can virtually restore their health within a few months so they can carry on life as normal. But for others, whose health has been heavily impacted, their ability to support themselves financially is much less likely.

The people the welfare project supports often have complex, ongoing social care and financial issues. The welfare project gives advise on everything related to welfare and financial support. From housing, universal credit and specialised benefits that are available to people who are living with HIV. They have specialist knowledge and can dedicate the time and hands on support that is sometimes needed to navigate the complexities of the benefits system.

As well as advice, form filling, letter writing and physical presence at tribunals, it also offers support that tackles loneliness and the stigma associated with HIV. Through one-to-one support, group sessions and workshops it encourages people to talk about the problems they are having and helps them build a network that connects them to people who are experiencing similar issues.

“When people come to us they have psychological issues and a lot of fear around how they will support themselves. The changes we see to people’s attitudes, behaviour and physical health when someone begins to get some control of their financial situation are enormous, the impact is massive.

– Fotios, Volunteer for the Welfare Project



Team with lived experience



1-2-1 support and advice



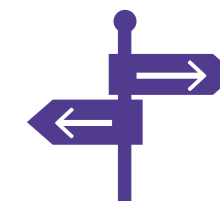
Workshops



Welfare advisor



Referrals to case workers



Signposting to other services

Working closely with



17 HIV clinics



Local voluntary partners



London-based immigration advisors

Financial pressures play a huge part in influencing whether someone can effectively engage with their health-care. If it interferes with their ability to get support, treatment and care their well-being suffers, they can become seriously ill or die and risk of onward transmission becomes high.



**100%**

reduction in the number of patients lost to follow up and re-engaged and retained in care.



**12** workshops



**1684+** interventions



**3** drop-in sessions



**750+** hours of support



**480+** people supported



**£1.8m** benefits secured



By helping people deal with their financial issues and linking them up with other voluntary organisations’ support services, we help get them back on track with their HIV treatment and care to improve their overall wellbeing





# REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Fast-Track Cities London HIV improvement collaborative has proven to be a significant initiative in the fight against HIV in London. Through its comprehensive approach, collaborative partnerships, and data-driven strategies, the initiative has made significant progress in achieving its goals and improving the lives of people living with HIV.

London's HIV community is unique. Its resilience and enthusiasm to embrace opportunities to improve the experiences of people living with HIV is inspiring. With these projects we have seen the evidence that by forging new pathways through health, care and communities, using targeted testing and interventions such as those developed and implemented here, healthcare providers can evolve to respond to the changing needs of a community of people who are eager to thrive while growing older with HIV.

One of the key successes of the initiative has been the establishment of a strong quality improvement collaborative network comprising the voluntary sector, NHS Trusts and people living with HIV. This multidisciplinary approach has allowed the initiative to address the complex challenges associated with HIV and ensure a holistic response for people living with HIV.

The data-driven approach of the Fast-Track Cities London HIV improvement collaborative has been instrumental in guiding decision-making and monitoring progress. Through the collection and analysis of data alongside the flexibility of the quality improvement approach, the initiative has been able to identify areas of need, target interventions, and evaluate the impact of interventions over time. This evidence-based approach has not only helped in identifying gaps but also in tailoring interventions to specific populations and communities, resulting in more effective outcomes.

The initiative has achieved notable success in increasing the rates of HIV testing and diagnosis in London. By implementing innovative testing strategies, such as community-based testing initiatives, testing in faith settings and using community champions to encourage testing in underserved communities, the collaborative has been able to reach individuals who may have otherwise been reluctant to get tested. This has resulted in earlier detection of HIV infection, timely access to treatment, and improved health outcomes for individuals living with HIV.

Over the past three years an additional 5,000 people in London were tested for HIV. There have been 18 new diagnoses and we saw a 100% reduction in the number of patients lost to follow up and being re-engaged and retained in care with support to stay on medication or maintain their care plans. Earlier diagnosis improves the health of individuals who are living with HIV and prevents new infections, while reducing significant health and social care costs. Across London, all emergency departments are now automatically testing people for HIV as part of their clinical assessments. GPs and primary care providers are also beginning to pilot opt-out testing with NHS health checks and in colposcopy clinics. However, this collaborative has proven that faith settings will continue to be an important avenue to testing in underserved communities and the support of faith leaders will be vital in making this a success.

In addition to testing and diagnosis, the collaborative has focused on improving the continuum of care for people living with HIV. Through targeted interventions, such as peer support, the initiative has increased access to treatment and support services. By reducing barriers to care and providing comprehensive support, the collaborative has contributed to higher rates of viral suppression and improved quality of life for individuals living with HIV.

Through the work of the peer support projects, altogether over 1,160 people received support from a peer or mentor. It was shown to be particularly successful for people who had complex health needs and who typically faced more challenges to maintaining their health and keeping on medication. In one major London trust the joint work of clinicians and the peer support worker meant that the number of complex patients reaching an undetectable status increased from 60% to 85%.

Moving forward, London is now in the process of designing a specification for providing peer support as part of all HIV clinics. This was made possible by the success of the approaches used, the changes in behaviours and attitudes that came about, and the relationships forged through the commitment of the peer support workers and clinicians within the services that participated in these projects.

For people living with a long-term condition, following a care plan and sustaining good health requires commitment. The likelihood of success can depend on many factors, including mental wellbeing, being part of a supportive community of friends and family and feeling the acceptance and understanding from the society we live and work within. Living with HIV is no different.

Unfortunately, overall, people who are living with HIV rate their health-related quality of life lower than the general population, particularly in relation to anxiety and depression. The stigma associated with HIV compounds the situation. There is more work to do on better supporting people's mental health, ensuring they can access support for difficulties with drugs and alcohol, and helping to educate clinicians and health providers to the challenges experienced by people living with HIV.

The collaborative has also played a vital role in reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination in London. Through the work in faith settings, through peer support work, drugs and alcohol and mental health projects the collaborative has worked to dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding HIV, promote understanding and acceptance, and create an inclusive environment for people living with HIV.

By addressing stigma, the collaborative has encouraged individuals to seek testing and treatment.

Over the next three years Fast-Track Cities London will be working with the National Aids Trust, Terrance Higgins Trust, Positively UK, NAM aidsmap, other HIV charities and health and care providers to find more ways to reduce the impact stigma associated with HIV has and help ensure people who are living with HIV have the support they need to truly live well for many years to come.

Looking ahead, the Fast-Track Cities London initiative must continue its efforts to sustain and build upon the progress achieved thus far. It is crucial to maintain collaborative partnerships and data-driven approaches, with improvement methodology that have been the foundation of the success so far. By continually monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions, the Fast-Track Cities London initiative can identify emerging challenges and adapt its strategies accordingly.

Furthermore, Fast-Track Cities London must continue to prioritise the involvement of affected communities and people living with HIV in the design and decision-making processes. By ensuring that the voices of those directly affected are heard and valued, the HIV improvement collaborative developed interventions that were responsive to the unique needs and experiences of different populations.

In conclusion, the Fast-Track Cities London HIV improvement collaborative has been a catalyst for change in the fight against HIV in London. Through its comprehensive and collaborative approach, data-driven strategies, and community engagement, Fast-Track Cities London can continue to make a lasting impact on the HIV epidemic in London and serve as a model for other cities around the world.

 Our projects launched across 3 themes **2020**



Testing



Improving quality of life and psychosocial support



Peer support

Working directly with

**22**



Voluntary and community organisations + their local partners

**9**



Hospital trusts



**5,950+**  
people tested

Testing in a range of settings including



Faith settings



Homeless shelters



Health clinics



Community organisations



Mobile clinic in communities

 **950+** test kits distributed

Reaching people in underserved communities



From black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds



Experiencing homelessness



Mothers of young children



Struggling with alcohol and drugs



Women aged 40+

**“** We are supporting... **70** people struggling with alcohol and drugs **92%** are undetectable **HIV status recorded increased from only 50% up to 95%** **”**

People in our social groups for mothers of young children



say...



I feel more connected with people like me, it helps me break through the feelings of isolation

Educational videos **150,000** views



**1000+**  
people receiving psychosocial support

People receiving psychosocial support report... **I feel less isolated and more confident**



**2,500+**  
people supported

Clinician referrals



into peer support services increased by **12x**



**Many people tell us...** I've never been tested in the UK for HIV... I've never heard of PEP or PrEP...

We are supporting more people to access benefits

We've seen **100%**

reduction in the number of patients lost to follow up and re-engaged in care



**£1.8m+** benefits secured



**18**  
People diagnosed with HIV and getting treatment





**May 2023**

**Fast-Track Cities London**  
**[www.fasttrackcities.london](http://www.fasttrackcities.london)**