

Press release: Innovative HIV prevention projects reached 170,000 people in 2018

Projects working towards preventing HIV across England, which were funded by the Public Health England (PHE) HIV Innovation Fund, reached around 170,000 people at-risk of, or living with HIV – as well as the general public in 2017 to 2018.

The projects provided innovative, community-led interventions, through online campaigns, outreach, testing, support and media and art projects. The news comes as PHE announced the 14 local pioneering projects that have been awarded a share of the £600,000 fund available in 2018 to 2019.

The Fund supports volunteer organisations spearheading new approaches to HIV prevention and focuses on engaging at-risk or under-served communities, with the aim of funded initiatives ultimately being replicated and scaled up.

Previous success stories from the Fund include PROMOTE, a project run by Terrence Higgins Trust and the Bristol Drug Project, which focused on reducing the risk of HIV in male sex workers (MSW) and sex workers of other genders.

The project targeted between 50 to 150 MSW in Bristol, and found that building rapport with community members during online outreach was paramount as a first step, and peer-support groups are vital to MSWs' health and wellbeing.

Another successful project in 2018, run by National Prison Radio, was a radio and podcast series for prisoners that aimed to dispel myths about HIV and provided support to people living with the virus in prisons.

Sex Talk was presented by BBC Radio 1's Adele Roberts and talk show host Hilary Ineomo-Marcus. Over 24 episodes, Sex Talk featured over 70 people or organisations who are experts in this field, being medical professionals or those raising awareness, and, most importantly, people living with HIV. A series was available and broadcast to over 80,000 prisoners across England and Wales.

This year's initiatives will support the UK's ambition to achieve zero new HIV transmissions by 2030, which will be announced at the Global AIDS Forum today, Wednesday 30 January 2019. Projects that have been awarded funding from PHE this year include two charities collaborating to prevent HIV in women with female genital mutilation (FGM) in Berkshire; and The Grass is Always Grindr, a weekly drama series published on YouTube that focuses on how Londoners are affected by HIV.

Innovative, community-led interventions have a significant role to play in

limiting the spread of HIV by targeting at-risk groups, including gay and bisexual men, black and minority ethnic groups (BAME), and prisoners. This is important when HIV remains a public health concern despite major advances in treatment and reductions in diagnosis. In 2017 an estimated 102,000 people were living with HIV and an estimated 7,800 people were undiagnosed.

Luis Guerra, National Programme Manager for HIV, Sexual Health, and Reproductive Health at Public Health England, said:

The HIV Innovation Fund continues to foster new approaches to HIV prevention, with a range of projects offering new and exciting ways to address key issues in HIV prevention, working particularly with high-risk groups. Projects work alongside the great programmes already running, to prevent HIV transmission and support people living with HIV across England.

We have made fantastic headway lowering rates of HIV, and are excited to see how innovative projects around the country will help us eliminate all new cases by 2030.

Health Minister Steve Brine said:

Today we made the bold commitment to end HIV transmission in England by 2030.

With the huge advances in antiretroviral therapy, a person diagnosed with HIV in the UK today can expect a normal life expectancy, but no one needs to contract the virus in the first place.

We have the tools to eliminate HIV transmission – prevention, detection, and treatment. To help those most at risk, we need to support innovative community-led projects – they will target key communities and help end transmission in England.

HIV Innovation Fund projects complement existing work to tackle HIV and poor sexual health. Local authorities, NHS providers and community organisations all work together to improve sexual health and reduce rates of HIV and STIs. HIV Innovation Fund projects receive funding from the DHSC through PHE.

There were 14 HIV Innovation Fund projects in 2018 to 2019.

HIV documentary theatre in prisons:

A programme to develop a documentary theatre piece around HIV prevention and stigma particularly focused on and developed with those in secure settings in England (Prison Radio Association, National).

The Grass is Always Grindr (Season 2):

A weekly drama series published on YouTube that focuses on the lives of a few Londoners and how they are affected by HIV (CW+, National).

Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention for Chemsex:

Developing a mindfulness-based approach for reducing and stopping harmful drug use in gay and bisexual men (Spectra, London).

Preventing HIV in women with FGM:

Linking a longstanding HIV support organisation with a dedicated charity working with survivors of FGM (Thames Valley Positive Support, Berkshire).

Raising Awareness of HIV in the over 50's:

Developing a local campaign and resources around HIV testing, prevention and stigma directed at adults aged over 50 (Age UK Wiltshire, Wiltshire).

Talking progress – challenging HIV and HIV stigma via spoken word:

Developing 20 spoken word pieces through workshops with black African's living in mixed HIV status relationships (Positive East, East, and South East London).

MobPrESH – mobilising for PrEP and sexual health:

Building capacity for community responses to HIV by creating between 50 to 70 skilled peer 'mobilisers' who can educate and talk about PrEP (The Love Tank CIC PrEPster, London, the South West and North of England).

Catwalks for Power:

Empowering marginalised women living with HIV to accept their HIV diagnosis, establish support networks within local areas and challenge HIV related stigma in local areas through fashion shows (Positively UK, Manchester, Brighton, London).

Increasing awareness of PrEP among black African communities and heterosexual women in Leeds (BHA for Equality, Leeds).

PrEPared:

Working to increase awareness of PrEP among black African communities and heterosexual women in Leeds – BHA for Equality, Leeds.

Online focus groups for young guys into guys (GiG):

Setting up online forums will be a space for young men to discuss their lives and sexuality (METRO, Kent and Medway).

E-PrEP Programme:

Using a community participatory approach to increase awareness of PrEP, increase testing and reduce late diagnosis in BAME communities and Latin American MSM (METRO, National).

Soul Sisters:

Providing training and support for 10 organisations that provide services for survivors of violence against women (NAZ, London).

PrEP & Prejudice:

Influencing how black African communities engage in HIV prevention through targeted outreach in locations such as barber shops and restaurants (Africa Advocacy Foundation, Manchester, Bristol, Leicester, Birmingham, Bristol and St Albans).

There were 12 Innovation Fund projects in 2017 to 2018, with estimates of the amount of people reached.

Digital anti-stigma campaign:

Developing digital content, videos and social marketing targeting higher risk communities reached at least 22,743 ([Martin Fisher Foundation, Brighton and Hove.](#))

I Am Because We Are:

Challenging HIV issues and stigma within Black African communities a play touring the North West aiming to reach at least 600 people ([BHA For Equality, Greater Manchester](#)).

Improving uptake and safe use of PrEP in underserved populations:

Creating online assessment tools for PrEP and facilitating safe usage aimed to reach 4,500 ([Terence Higgins Trust, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire](#)).

MAP Tyne and Wear:

Capturing local knowledge about male sex workers to inform and shape other sexual health services reached and supported around 15 men (Gateshead, Sunderland and North Tyneside).

“MIND” The Gap:

Developing an HIV and sexual health training programme for mental health service staff trained 855 health professionals in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire (Herts Aid).

PrEP:

Raising awareness of PrEP amongst MSM, BME and trans communities trained 54 PrEP champions and reached 1,124 people through engagement sessions and provided 12 training sessions for partner agencies (Spectra, South West London).

Prepping for PrEP:

Improving awareness of PrEP amongst at-risk African communities by engaging key community members reached over 63,000 people through social media ([Positive East](#), East London and Hertfordshire).

PROMOTE:

Creating digital outreach and support services for male sex workers and their clients reached 1,120 people through their specialised outreach and support approach ([Bristol Drugs Project](#), Bristol).

Reducing Barriers to Testing:

Facilitating self-testing within Black African communities provided self-test kits to nearly 3,300 people (Terence Higgins Trust, Wolverhampton).

Sex Talk on National Prison Radio:

Creating information for prisoners to address issues of stigma around HIV reaching more than 60,000 people in secure settings that listen to prison radio ([Prison Radio Association](#), England, Wales and Scotland).

Sholay Love:

Raising awareness of HIV and STIs and encouraging testing amongst south Asian gay men testing 275 men and reaching thousands more through outreach, workshops and online resources (NAZ, London, Bradford, Leeds).

The Morning After Project:

Providing education and harm reduction in chemsex via a dedicated project worker reached and supported 75 men participating in chemsex (Summit House Support, Dudley).

PHE HIV Innovation Fund

The National HIV Prevention Innovation Fund is funded by the allocation from the Department of Health to PHE for HIV prevention and sexual health promotion. This is the third year of the innovation fund in which PHE have awarded funding to a total of 32 projects (7 in 2015 to 2016, 13 in 2016 to 2017 and 12 in 2017 to 2018). Projects submitting HIV prevention proposals to the HIV Innovation Fund must have local authority endorsement to be eligible for the fund. The innovation fund is advertised at the [HIV Prevention England website](#) where application details are available.

HIV in the UK, 2017 PHE report

PHE's ['Progress towards ending the HIV epidemic in the UK: 2018 report'](#) showed that in 2017:

- 92% of people living with HIV in the UK have been diagnosed, 98% of those diagnosed were on treatment, and 97% of those on treatment were virally suppressed
- an estimated total of 102,000 people were living with HIV in the UK in 2017, with 8% (7,800) unaware of their infection
- as a result of treatment, 87% of all people living with HIV have an undetectable viral load and are unable to pass on their infection to other people (this is widely known as 'Undetectable equals Untransmissible' or 'U=U')
- new HIV diagnoses continued to decline in the UK, falling 17% from 5,280 in 2016 to 4,363 in 2017
- in 2017, 43% (1,879) of new HIV diagnoses were made at a late stage of HIV infection

HIV: Surveillance, data and management:

The HIV in the UK Health Protection Report and annual [HIV data tables](#) comprise the number of HIV diagnoses, late HIV diagnoses and numbers accessing HIV care. Data can be interrogated and analysed at Local Authority level via [an online tool allowing a range of outputs to be generated.](#)

The December [2016 edition of Health Matters](#), PHE's resource for local authorities and health professionals focuses on increasing HIV testing.

HIV testing

It is easy to get tested for HIV. Testing is freely available through GP surgeries, local hospitals and sexual health clinics as well as on self-sampling and self-testing (see [NHS.UK](#) for further information). As well as getting tested, using a condom with new or casual partners protects against HIV and other STIs.