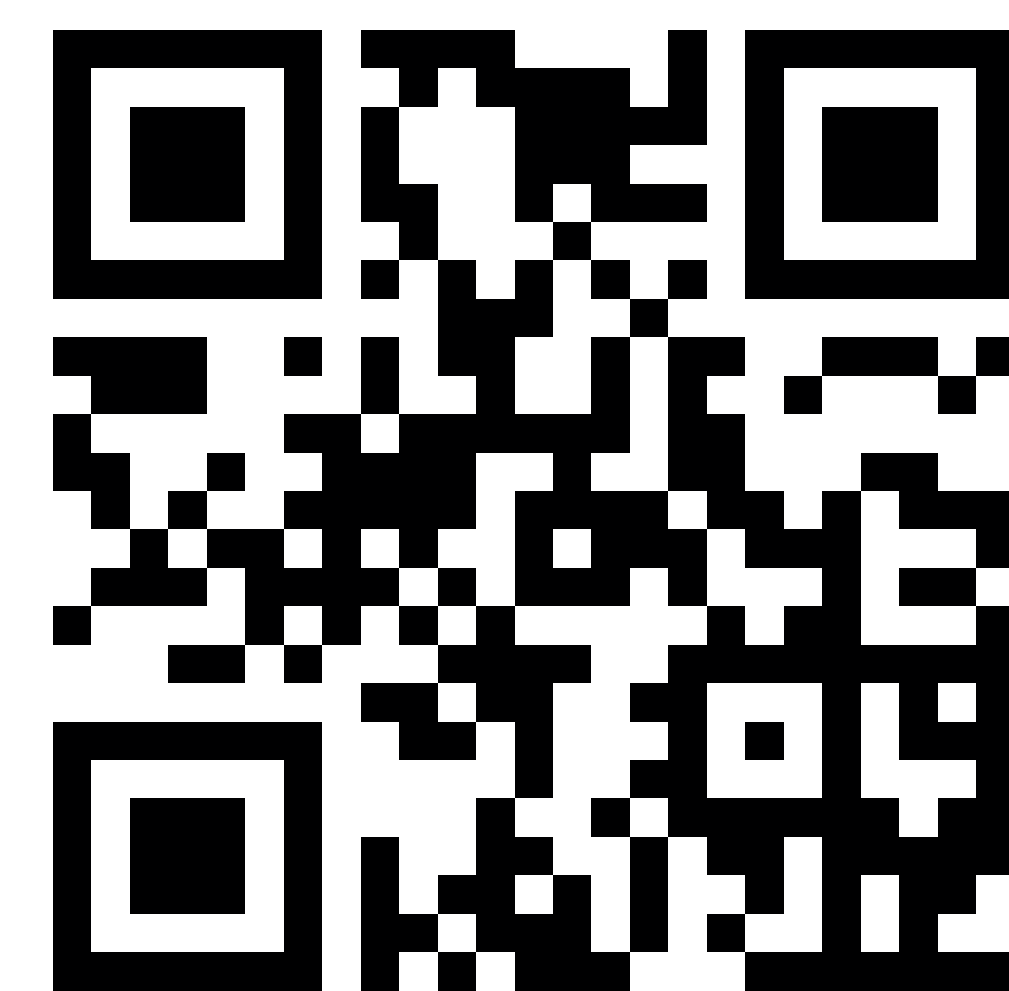
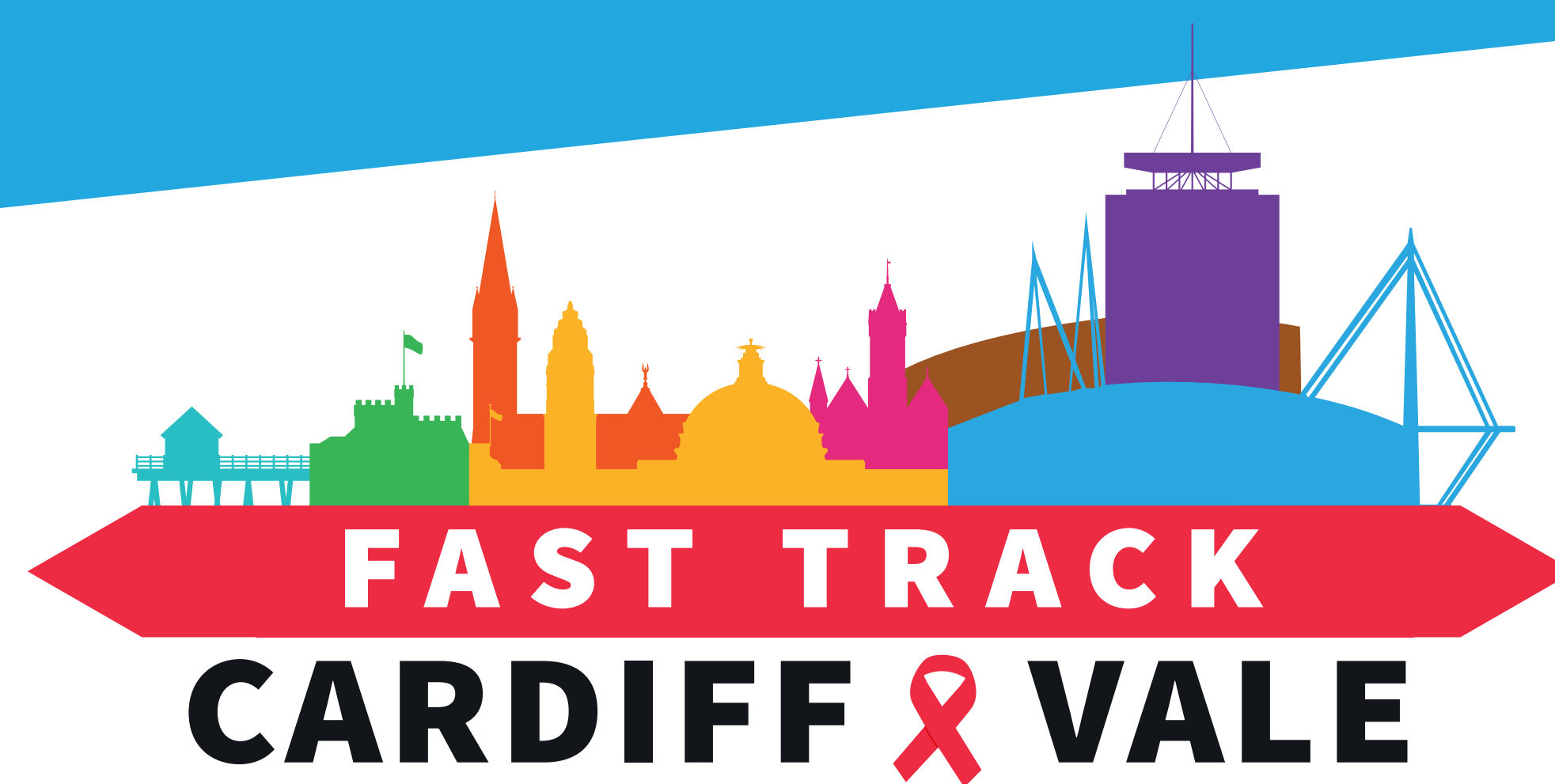


Want to know more? Check the QR code

www.fasttrackcardiff.wales



# Networking for HIV/AIDS prevention: impact of social media promotion on widening access and uptake of HIV testing

**Authors:** Dr Alessandro Ceccarelli<sup>1</sup>; Ms Lisa Power<sup>1</sup>; Mrs Zoe Couzens<sup>2</sup>; Dr Jonathan Underwood<sup>3</sup>; Dr Darren Cousins<sup>4</sup>

1 Fast Track Cardiff & Vale, United Kingdom - contact: fasttrackcities@hiv.wales

2 Public Health Wales NHS Trust, Cardiff, United Kingdom

3 Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Cardiff, United Kingdom

4 Cardiff Royal Infirmary; Cardiff University, United Kingdom

## Background:

- Evaluation of the impact of a volunteer produced and delivered social media strategy to promote HIV and STI testing as part of Wales **HIV Testing Week 2021**.

- Collaboration between clinicians, local authority, university, and community sector to prevent late diagnoses of HIV: **Fast Track Cardiff & Vale**.

## Methods:

- Metrics from mainstream social media networks including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to assess engagement and organic reach of messages promoted at different stages of the testing week, including views, click-throughs and sharing.
- Number of home HIV postal testing orders using the national online testing platform was compared with previous years from Public Health Wales data.

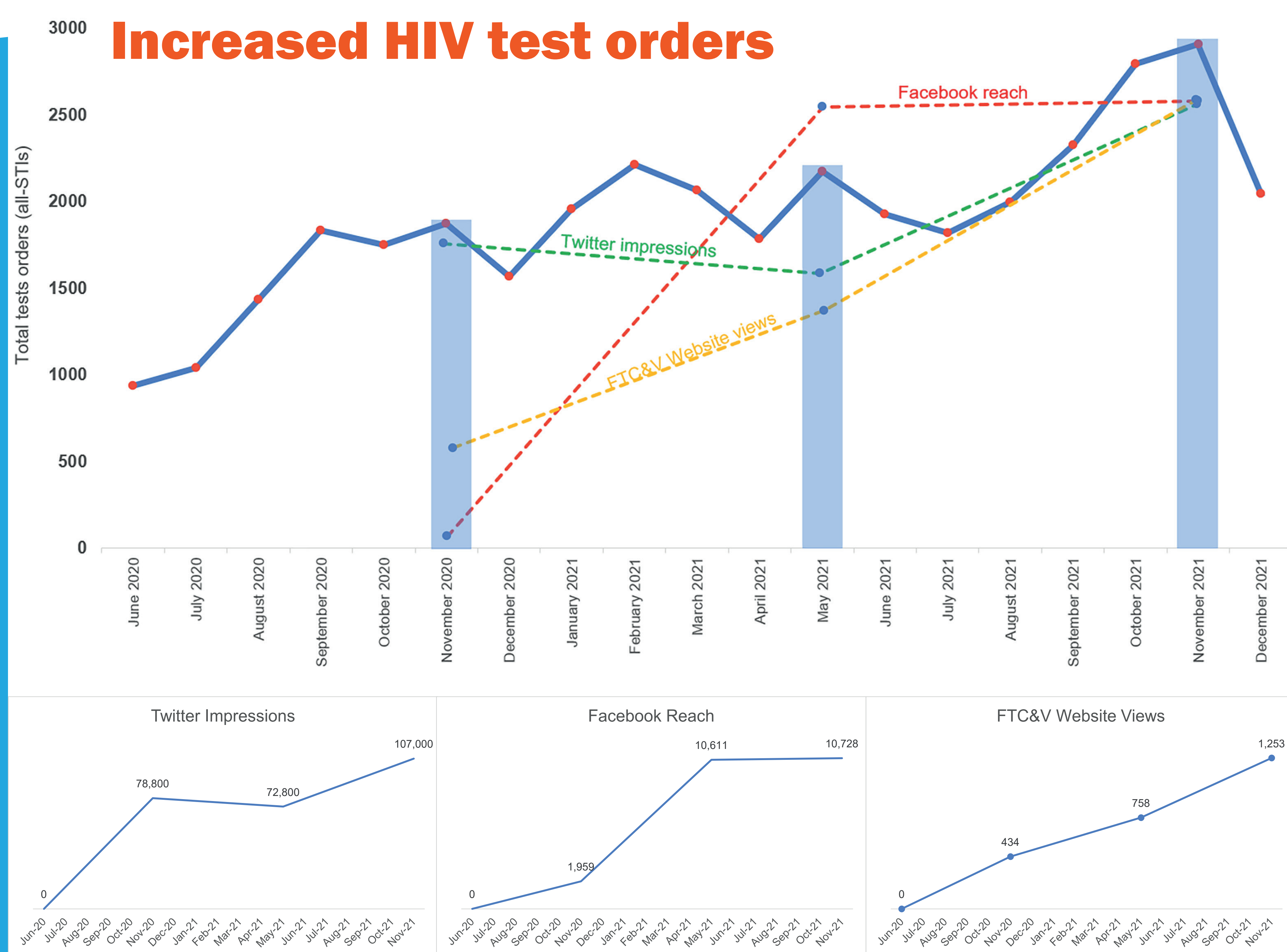
## Results:

- Wales HIV testing week ran from 21 to 27 November 2021.
- A similar picture was observed across all Wales, i.e. the total of seven Health Boards: increase of test orders from 5,787 in November 2020 to 8,254 in November 2021 (+42.6%).
- The number of users reached increased significantly: compared to the previous HIV testing campaign,
  - +360% accounts reached on Instagram;
  - +277% engagement on Twitter;
  - +188% campaign website views.

The most liked Twitter message was a video from a local Welsh celebrity, a former professional rugby player, which had 18,432 views and 296 users interacted with it. The range of impressions was 12,400 per day over the period covered by the campaign, with an average of 41 retweets per day.

## Widening uptake of HIV testing:

- **+55.2%** orders of home HIV testing in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB).
- From 1,875 orders in November 2020 to 2,911 in November 2021 in the week of the social media promotions compared to the previous year.



**Figure - STIs postal tests from online booking** – Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. The graph shows the increase of all-STI orders online (blue line and red dots) from June 2020 up until December 2021. The dotted lines show a schematic representation of the increased social media engagement (green: twitter impressions; amber: FTC&V website views; red: Facebook reach) based on data collected during the Testing Week campaigns in November 2020, May 2021, and November 2021 - as reflected in the three lower graphs.

Messages from local celebrities had more impact, particularly those of local fame across all platforms (e.g., on Facebook, a video of a local Welsh artist reached 8,400 people, compared to content with international and US celebrities who reached an average of c.450 people). The positive messaging reached statutory organisations, social groupings, and individuals in all demographics. The impact was particularly felt in those with Welsh location-based data suggesting focussed take up in the geographical area of interest.

## Challenges:

- Research is needed to evaluate the testing outcomes in those who test due to social media campaigns to ensure that those with the greatest need and the digitally excluded are not left behind.
- Challenge of using volunteers is to maintain enthusiasm in the long term or empower the statutory sector to continue the health promotion work.

## Conclusion:

Volunteer-delivered HIV testing promotion had extensive impact which translated into **increased HIV testing** using online sexual health services - where the statutory sectors struggle to engage.

## Acknowledgments:

Supported by an unrestricted grant from ViV Healthcare as part of a larger project.