

A series of interactive films aimed at targeting HIV stigma in black African communities in the UK.

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Background

Black Africans (BA) are disproportionately affected by HIV in England, making up 38% of heterosexuals diagnosed in 2017, 57% of whom were diagnosed late. Late diagnosis was even higher in BA men (69%).

Stigma significantly limits uptake of HIV prevention and testing tools and services (NICE, 2017). People living with HIV (PLWHIV) experience more depression and anxiety than the general population (33% and 26%, compared to 19% and 15% respectively) (Auzenberg et al, 2018).

Research shows that effective stigma interventions "allow the exploration of the personal experience through a story" (NAT, 2016). This project addressed HIV stigma among BA PLWHIV and other BA through storytelling, a strong tradition in many BA cultures.

Method

Working with Brown Boys Productions, Terrence Higgins Trust held interviews and focus groups with BA PLWHIV about their experiences of stigma and how it affected their life and relationships.

We produced three interactive films based on these experiences, covering disclosure in relationships, late diagnosis, dating, and abuse.

Their Story, Your Choice is a pioneering new way of using film to tackle HIV stigma in black African communities. Viewers choose the characters' actions which influences the outcomes of each story.

Each film has eight possible outcomes. They are hosted on the Terrence Higgins Trust website, with information on HIV and referral to testing services.

To ensure the films are realistic, culturally appropriate, appealing, and medically accurate we:

- user tested during production with BA PLWHIV and other BA
- engaged a BA writer living with HIV as a consultant
- conducted medical peer reviews.

Films are promoted via social media.

As well as being watched by individuals, the films can also be used to encourage discussion in workshops and one-to-one sessions together with our briefing packs.



Results as of 26 March 2019

- 73,089 landed on the first scene of a film
- On average 27% watched to the end of a story line (includes some who may have watched more than one story line)
- 247 had conversations on social media. Data showed a significant proportion were impacted, learnt something new, and had engaged online.
- 2,182 reacted on social media
- 1,136 shared the films on social media
- 330 visited 'where to get a test' page
- 354 looked at the testing page
- 89 self tests ordered – 59 of these by BAs
- 6,945 looked at other pages on Terrence Higgins Trust's site.

From the way people watched multiple strands, chatted online, and ordered tests we can tell they learnt from the films, behaviour was influenced, and attitudes about HIV were altered.

Conclusion

Using storytelling and drama coupled with social media advertising has enabled us to reach a high volume of BA people disproportionately affected by HIV to address HIV stigma, demonstrating that this is an effective educational prevention tool.

