

Towards Positive Practice

The experiences of people living with HIV
when accessing primary healthcare



BACKGROUND

Commissioned by Manchester City Council's Population Health Team, George House Trust carried out a research and engagement exercise focused on the experiences of people living with HIV when accessing primary healthcare.

METHODS

- 149 responses to an online survey
- Focus groups for women, heterosexual men, African men, people aged 55+ and over and people identifying as LGBT+ with a total engagement of 22 people
- Online roundtable discussion attended by HIV clinicians, a 'HIV Champion' GP and people living with HIV

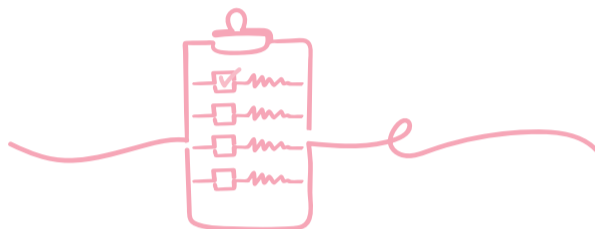
AREAS OF FOCUS

- Had people told their GP that they were living with HIV?
- Did people feel confident discussing HIV with their GP?
- Did people feel that their GP had an adequate understanding of HIV?
- Were people happy with the way healthcare information is shared?

KEY FINDINGS

- 96% of survey respondents had told their GP about their HIV status
- 78% of respondents felt confident discussing HIV with their GP
- 52% reported feeling confident that their GP has sufficient understanding and knowledge about HIV

"My GP admits that their knowledge of HIV is not 'expert'. We discuss treatments and possibilities together. If I feel there are questions my GP and I cannot answer together I consult my HIV team. I felt that this joined up approach has served me well"



WIDER THEMES

Respondents also reported:

- Concerns about prescribing, with many feeling that GPs do not have an adequate understanding about contraindications

"My GP knew to ask about certain vaccinations and made sure I had received them. Their understanding of where to go for drug interactions was slow – I had to tell them to use the Liverpool University App"

- Lack of confidence in GPs willingness to treat general health conditions with no clear link to HIV

"No matter what I go to see my GP about, it's almost always the same response and they always ask if I've spoken to my HIV Consultant... I'm sure an ingrowing toenail would get the same response"

- Concerns raised about continuity of care with people rarely seeing the same GP. It was felt that this impacted on communication and could lead to worse health outcomes

"Seeing different doctors came up as another reason they are not confident discussing HIV with them, noting that it felt like starting your story again, about your treatment etc."

- Lack of confidence in the information sharing process between GP and HIV clinic and concerns about wider NHS confidentiality

"I received a letter from another hospital department about a test I was to do and they mentioned HIV in the letter, and yet the test they were to take had nothing to do with HIV"

- Overall generally positive experiences of GP support with a minority of people reporting experiencing stigma in healthcare settings

"My present GP is fine with everything, but my previous GP practice treated me like an outcast. If I had an appointment, I was deliberately left to the last to be seen, and patients who should have been seen after me were seen first"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Undertake a follow-up survey with GPs across Greater Manchester to identify self-identified gaps in knowledge and understanding
- Develop an agreed baseline level of knowledge about HIV amongst GPs across Greater Manchester



- The necessity of treating presenting conditions in people living with HIV without referring to specialist clinicians
- Work with George House Trust on delivering Positive Speaker sessions in GP practices as a way of learning more about the lived experiences of HIV

People living with HIV should:

- Continue to be encouraged to discuss HIV status with their GP in order to ensure best health outcomes
- Be notified that if choosing to share HIV status with a GP, this information will be widely available to other healthcare professionals in the NHS

GPs should be made aware of:

- The need to check consistently for potential prescribed medication contraindications with HIV
- The importance of explaining the information sharing process
- When it may and may not be appropriate to share details of patient's HIV status

