

Midway Evaluation: Summary Version April 2024



What is Positive Voices?

Since 2016, Brigstowe has been delivering 'Positive Voices', a set of services for people living with HIV which are delivered by other people living with HIV.

- 'One-to-one' peer support. Provided by volunteer peer mentors in the community (a 16 week programme) and at a local NHS HIV clinic (Brecon, North Bristol NHS Trust).
- · 'All In' group peer support. Including educational and social events
- 'Awareness Training'. For organisations and community groups.

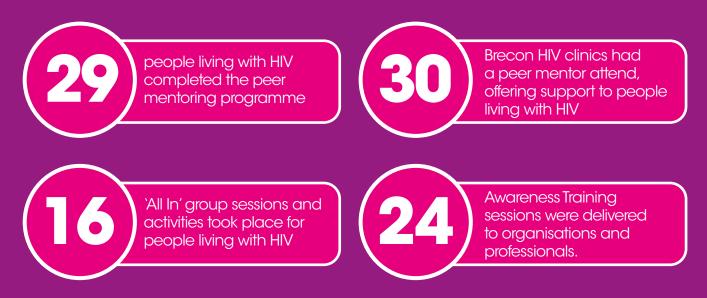
Positive Voices aims to **improve emotional wellbeing**, **social inclusion and HIV selfmanagement**. It also **tackles stigma** by improving the expertise and attitudes of professionals and communities.

About the evaluation

- This evaluation reviewed the period from June 2021 to Oct 2023.
- It explored the impact of Positive Voices and determined how the services could improve and develop
- An independent researcher conducted the evaluation. They
 - analysed documents and datasets about how Positive Voices operates, what has been delivered, and service user feedback.
 - interviewed 14 people involved in planning, delivering or participating in Positive Voices

'Positive Voices' activities delivered

During the evaluation period



Note-Face-to-face activities were restricted by COVID-19 during year 1 of the evaluation period.

Key findings - Peer mentoring

- Peer mentoring serves a **diverse population** and reaches some **typically under-served groups**. This includes people living in high-deprivation areas, gay men, people of Black African and Caribbean heritage, asylum seekers and economic migrants new to Bristol.
- Peer mentoring leads to a wide variety of positive effects on the physical health, psychological wellbeing, and social opportunities and inclusion of people living with HIV.
- The impact can be **profound and life-changing**. Examples included finding work or training, overcoming mental health difficulties, re-engaging in social and leisure activities, beginning romantic relationships, starting a family, disclosing HIV status, and overcoming barriers with healthcare and medication regimes.



Key findings - Clinic mentoring

Clinic mentors are important for **individuals in crisis**. They provide a **warm introduction** to Brigstowe's services and a **role model of someone living well with HIV**.

Brief chats at the clinic can **lead to mentoring relationships** and **connections with other support services**.

The Brecon clinic staff think mentors are a **good fit strategically** with their service. Mentors help with their aim of delivering **comprehensive care to their patients**.

It's a massive support to us as a clinical team because we don't have time to actually start implementing social support (Health Professional)

I know [my patients] find it really helpful ...they seem to have received really nice support (Health Professional) [Support from a peer mentor with sticking to treatments] means that [my patients'] physical health is maintained. (Health Professional)

Key findings - "All in"

The **topics and frequency of group sessions** have evolved in response to **interest and demand** from people living with HIV.

The core offering is **educational group sessions about living with HIV** and social and cultural activities.

Sessions tend to be **well-attended**. They attract people from **diverse sociodemographic backgrounds**.

Feedback is excellent. Participants appreciate the opportunity to **increase their knowledge about HIV, connect with others** facing **similar challenges**, and **enjoy themselves**.

'All In' groups **serve the educational and social needs** of people living with HIV and their families. They complement the peer mentoring program. The process of thinking through my journey is always beneficial and hearing others' stories is always great. ('All In' Participant)

[It helped me] to gain previously unseen perspective ('All In' Participant)

Key findings - "Awareness Training"

Training recipients include current and trainee **health and social care practitioners, local authorities, charities, and organizations** related to mental health, housing, and equality. Participants reported **improved knowledge and attitudes** after the training.



- attendees commented on how **moving and memorable** this aspect is.
- Almost all participants would recommend the training to others.



Recommendations and Next Steps

The evaluation produced **recommendations** about **optimising Positive Voices** delivery and **extending the impressive impact** already achieved.

The **main recommendation** is that **all Positive Voices services should continue** and that finding funding to sustain them is a priority.

Other recommendations include

- Improving clinic mentoring set up and processes so that more patients attending the Brecon clinic benefit.
- Developing **follow-up procedures** for people who drop out of mentoring or show interest but don't begin.
- Piloting new approaches to group support.

- Continuing efforts to engage underserved populations.
- Working with key collaborators and organisations to increase the reach and effectiveness of 'Awareness Training' and stigma-reduction initiatives.
- Celebrating and promoting the successes of the Positive Voices so that more individuals and organisations are aware of its scope and value.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the interviewees who participated in the evaluation, generously sharing their time, perspectives and experiences. Thank you to all Brigstowe volunteers, staff, trustees and service users who support, deliver and use Positive Voices services. Thank you also to The National Lottery Community Fund, who currently fund Positive Voices, as well as all the staff at the Brecon HIV clinic (North Bristol NHS Trust) and all our partner organisations.

The full report is available on the <u>Brigstowe website</u> The report was produced by Dr Laura Dennison from Vital Insights Consulting Ltd.





