



positive voices



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 self-management**. 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

29

people living with HIV completed the peer mentoring programme

30

Brecon HIV clinics had a peer mentor attend, offering support to people living with HIV

16

'All In' group sessions and activities took place for people living with HIV

24

Awareness Training sessions were delivered to organisations and professionals.

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.

It's a massive, massive thing for her. It's the best thing that's happening in her life pretty much.
(Brigstowe Staff)

[Being diagnosed with HIV] was so confusing, I just needed somebody to sit with me and explain.
(Mentee)

It gives me feeling like they remember me, they think of me, they care.
(Mentee)

It had a huge impact on me. Because it helped me to feel more confident. And myself.
(Mentee)

- The mentors are **well trained and supervised**. They **benefit personally** from the experience.

I've grown very much as a person. I've learned many things from all my mentees....
(Mentor)

They all came from different countries. It's very enriching to know their cultures and experiences.
(Mentor)

It's very self-satisfying as well because you get a lot out of it for yourself... it's helped other pieces of my life.
(Mentor)

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.

88% have an improved understanding of HIV

83% have an improved understanding of HIV testing

83% are more confident challenging HIV stigma

80% are more confident talking about HIV

- The **‘Positive Speaker’** sharing their lived experience is **always** highly rated. Many attendees commented on how **moving and memorable** this aspect is.
- Almost all participants would recommend the training to others.

My mindset has completely changed and the learning will continue to impact my practice.
(Training Attendee)

[It’s made me] a better, more involved ally.
(Training Attendee)

They really spoke from the heart.
(Training Attendee)

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**.
- Seeking **additional opportunities to enhance HIV awareness, knowledge, and stigma reduction** by continuing to **collaborate** with local or national partners and organizations.
- **Celebrating and promoting the successes** of the Positive Voices so that more individuals and organisations are aware of its scope and value.

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The full report is available on the [Brigstowe website](#). The report was produced by Dr Laura Dennison from Vital Insights Consulting Ltd.

