



Major 3 year project secures nearly £500k in funding to tackle HIV inequalities in the African and Caribbean communities of Bristol

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A major three-year-project is to launch in Bristol to work with people of African and Caribbean heritage to increase HIV testing and awareness and reduce the stigma of the virus.

The project has been awarded a £483,697 Common Ambition Grant from The Health Foundation with the aim of reducing HIV health inequalities experienced by people of African and Caribbean heritage living in Bristol and the surrounding area.

The results achieved by this project will help Bristol achieve the goals set out by the global Fast Track Cities partnership which Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees signed up to in November 2019. These are to reduce new HIV transmissions in the city to zero by 2030, whilst at the same time eradicating HIV stigma.

The project will be run by Brigstowe, a Bristol-based charity for people living with HIV, in partnership with African Voices Forum, the NHS-led Unity Sexual Health, Bristol City Council and Fast Track Cities Bristol. Researchers from the University of Bristol (NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West [ARC West] and NIHR Health Protection Research Unit [HPRU] in Behavioural Science and Evaluation) will work in collaboration with community members to evaluate the project.

In Bristol, 2.7 people out of 1,000 aged between 15 and 59 are living with HIV. The rate has been steadily increasing since 2011 and is higher than the average for England (2.4 per 1,000 people).

Last year, an [HIV Health Needs Assessment in Bristol](#) found there was a disproportionate number of people of African and Caribbean heritage with undiagnosed HIV, late HIV diagnosis associated with poor health outcomes, and experiencing stigma which results in a lower uptake of HIV or other sexual health services.

Now the Common Ambition Bristol project will see health care professionals and researchers work in co-production with African and Caribbean communities in Bristol and the surrounding area to introduce ways to increase the uptake of HIV testing and broader sexual health services. They will also aim to reduce late HIV diagnosis and stigma in these communities in the area.

The project will run from January 2021 until December 2023 and will support people who, to date, have had limited voice and power to make decisions about their communities' specific sexual health needs.

Rami Ghali, chief executive officer of Brigstowe, said: "Brigstowe are excited about the opportunity to lead this strong partnership. The heart of Common Ambition Bristol is about genuine co-production and learning – we're looking forward to working closely with African and Caribbean communities to find the best ways to increase HIV testing and reduce HIV stigma. We'll be recruiting a diverse team of paid African and Caribbean community members to help us develop and test new approaches."

David Dravie-John, vice chair of the African Voices Forum, said: "The African Voices Forum (AVF) Ltd, an umbrella organisation for 16 local community associations in Bristol, is delighted to be part of this wonderful partnership project, 'Common Ambition Bristol', that will



address the inequalities faced by African and Caribbean heritage communities on the transmission of HIV, knowledge of HIV, HIV stigma, HIV testing and uptake of treatment.”

Dr Lindsey Harryman, a consultant in genitourinary medicine at Unity Sexual Health which is led by University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW), said: “This is a fantastic opportunity to work with our partners in a completely new way to sustainably improve our NHS sexual health services with and for people of African and Caribbean heritage and to reduce the long-standing stigma around these issues. We look forward to sharing the learning from this project to both enable UHBW to improve other areas of healthcare for people of African and Caribbean heritage in Bristol and also to inform other sexual health services nationally to address issues of sexual health service delivery and stigma.”

Councillor Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor of Bristol, added: “As part of the global Fast Track Cities Initiative, Bristol is committed to ending HIV transmissions and the persistent inequalities experienced by some groups.

“If you truly want to work *for* communities then you have to work *with* communities. Being awarded this grant is such an important step for our partnership as we work alongside people of African and Caribbean heritage, looking at how best to achieve these goals.”

Dr Katy Turner, co-director of the Bristol Health Partners Sexual Health Improvement Programme Health Integration Team (SHIP HIT), said: “I’m really excited to be a part of this fantastic team to address health inequalities experienced by people of African and Caribbean heritage and make a real difference to our local community.”

Dr Jeremy Horwood, associate professor of social sciences and health at the University of Bristol/NIHR HPRU in Behavioural Science and Evaluation/NIHR ARC West, said: “We know that there are barriers to accessing HIV and sexual health services for some groups. In this pioneering project the NHS will co-produce sexual health services in equal partnership with people of African and Caribbean heritage to develop sustainable interventions to address these inequalities.”

Common Ambition Bristol is one of four projects selected by the Health Foundation, an independent charity, to be part of its new £2.1 million programme for partnerships developing collaborative communities where people, families, health care professionals and researchers work together to improve health care.

The ‘Common Ambition’ programme is supporting four teams with grants of between £300,000 and £500,000. Each project will run for between two and three years.

Each team is a partnership between the voluntary and community sector and the NHS, and will work to build sustainable change in healthcare through collaboration between those who use services and those who deliver them.

Laura Semple, assistant director of improvement programmes at the Health Foundation, said: “We are pleased to be able to support these partnerships to make improvements to health care services that are driven by members of the public working collaboratively with health care professionals.

“Voluntary and community sector organisations are vital to this type of collaboration because of their ability to harness the knowledge and skills in the community.”

ENDS



Notes to editors:

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About The Health Foundation

The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK.

Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. We learn what works to make people’s lives healthier and improve the healthcare system. From giving grants to those working at the front-line to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We make links between the knowledge we gain from working with those delivering health and healthcare and our research and analysis. Our aspiration is to create a virtuous circle, using what we know works on the ground to inform effective policymaking and vice versa.

We believe good health and healthcare are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people’s skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

Find out more at www.health.org.uk

About the organisations involved in the Common Ambition Bristol project:

Brigstowe:

Brigstowe are a charity who support anyone living with or affected by HIV in the Bristol and surrounding areas and have been doing so for nearly 25 years. We strive for a world in which people living with HIV and other long-term health conditions live long and healthy lives, free from poverty, stigma, prejudice and discrimination. We are also committed to raising awareness of HIV amongst the general public. To find out more please visit www.brigstowe.org

African Voices Forum:

African Voices Forum (AVF) Ltd is a Bristol-based network of African and African-Caribbean community associations/organisations, other community organisations working to empower Africans and African-Caribbeans to take active part in policies and initiatives that concern them, as well as other organisations that share and support the forum’s values, principles, and objectives. Its motto is Empowering People Of African Descent.

The AVF is registered in the UK as a company limited by guarantee with charitable objectives. It was set up on 18 March 2008 by African and African-Caribbean community groups following their participation in the African Voices conference organised at the Bristol City Council House on 1 March 2008 jointly by them and the Bristol-based Social Justice organisation, African Initiatives.



Unity Sexual Health

Unity Sexual Health is a free NHS service providing STI testing and treatment, contraception and pregnancy advice for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

The service is confidential, non-judgmental and for people of all ages, genders and orientations.

Unity Sexual Health is provided by University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with the following:

- British Pregnancy Advisory Service
- Brook
- Marie Stopes UK
- North Bristol NHS Trust
- Terrence Higgins Trust

Our aim is to provide a high quality informative service which supports our users. Everyone should be able to easily access our services to support healthier relationships and sexual well-being throughout life. More information is available at www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk/

Fast Track Cities:

The Fast-Track Cities initiative is a global partnership between cities and municipalities around the world and four core partners – the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the City of Paris.

Bristol signed up to become a Fast Track City on 30 November 2019. The network has grown to include more than 300 cities and municipalities that are committed to attain the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets by 2030: 95% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 95% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy (ART); and 95% of all HIV-diagnosed people receiving sustained ART will achieve viral suppression. Mayors and other city/municipal officials designate their cities as Fast-Track Cities by signing the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities, which outlines a set of commitments to achieve the initiative's objectives and a trajectory towards getting to zero new HIV infections and zero AIDS-related deaths.

NIHR Health Protection Research Unit [HPRU] in Behavioural Science and Evaluation at the University of Bristol:

The [NIHR HPRU in Behavioural Science and Evaluation at University of Bristol](#) is one of 14 HPRUs across England, part of a £58.7 million investment by the NIHR to protect the health of the nation. The NIHR HPRU in Behavioural Science and Evaluation is a partnership between Public Health England and University of Bristol, in collaboration with MRC Biostatistics Research Unit at the University of Cambridge and University of the West of England. Each NIHR HPRU undertakes high quality research that is used by PHE to keep the public safe from current and emerging public health threats.

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West:

The NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West (ARC West) conducts applied health research with [its partners](#) and others in the health and care sector, alongside patients and members of the public. Applied health research aims to address the immediate issues facing



the health and social care system. ARC West also helps bring research evidence into practice and provides training for the local workforce.

Bristol Health Partners:

Bristol Health Partners exists to improve the health of those who live in and around Bristol and to improve the delivery of the services on which they rely, and to act as a mechanism for change in our health and care community and our city region. Originally it was a strategic collaboration between the city's three acute and mental health NHS trusts, the NHS BNSSG Clinical Commissioning Group, the two Bristol universities and Bristol City Council. Recently Sirona care & health, the newly commissioned provider of adult community health services across BNSSG, NHS Blood and Transplant from its Bristol headquarters and North Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils have all joined the partnership. Bristol Health Partners aims to maximise health research, and to transform the understanding, prevention and treatment of key health problems across BNSSG. The 11 organisations involved have formed Bristol Health Partners voluntarily, and it is funded by contributions from the partners. The Health Integration Team (HIT) model is unique to Bristol Health Partners and brings together all local experts, regardless of organisational affiliation, to focus on a specific topic or condition.

The Sexual Health Improvement Programme Health Integration Team (SHIP HIT)

The Sexual Health Improvement Programme Health Integration Team (SHIP HIT) aims to transform services to improve sexual health for the people of Bristol and the South West. The HIT's priorities include increasing HIV testing uptake; improving STI testing and responding to antimicrobial resistant (AMR) infections; supporting patient and public involvement in sexual health and ending stigma; ending domestic violence; reducing health inequalities and developing a national network for sexual health improvement.