

2016... WHAT A YEAR!

Rami Ghali, Brigstowe's Project Coordinator looks back on some of the achievements and challenges of 2016...

Looking back over the last year I am really proud of how much Brigstowe have achieved. As a small organisation, these successes are testament to the staff that work here, the dedicated volunteers who week on week give their time and the feedback and input of our clients.

2016 saw Brigstowe being awarded two grants from charitable trusts - Local Sustainability Fund and BIG Lottery Fund. We have set up 'Positive Voices' a set of three new services for and by HIV positive people. We have moved offices, rebranded, celebrated 21 years of supporting people living with HIV in Bristol and hosted a public World AIDS Day vigil on College Green. We have also continued the essential work of offering specialist support and advice to people living with HIV.

This year, Brigstowe has experienced success but we know that stories are often not as simple as that, and it is true of ours. Nationally we are seeing HIV specific services decommissioned by Local Authorities leaving little or no support for HIV positive people.

In Bristol, we continue to see new HIV infections rising with just under half of those diagnosed late which has a heavy impact on long-term health outcomes. We have seen an increase in the number of clients referred to our services year on year. In addition, homelessness is becoming an increasingly common problem amongst our clients.

Although Brigstowe is currently doing well, our viability is insecure without continued local authority support. In January of this year we heard that Bristol City Council have proposed to stop funding our Support Service. If this goes ahead it will threaten Brigstowe's viability. We are currently working hard with the council and our clients to try and overturn this decision.

Throughout last years successes and our more recent hardships, I continue to be humbled by the support of our clients, so I will just leave you with this quote from one of our clients:

"Brigstowe has shown me empathy and understanding and treats us all with dignity. They have taught me that HIV positive people count. Not just as a statistic, but as human lives worth fighting for."

Newly Diagnosed Group

Receiving an HIV diagnosis can be a shocking, confusing and emotional time—having the right information from the start will help you face the future.

Our recently diagnosed workshops will answer the following questions and more....

What support is out there?

Will I have side effects from the medication?

Will I ever be in a relationship again?

What do I say to my children?

Do I need to tell my employer?

DATES

Saturday 4th March 10am – 4pm

Tuesday 7th March 6pm – 9pm

Tuesday 14th March 6pm – 9pm

It is important that you attend all three sessions. Workshops are facilitated by professionals and people living with HIV.

All sessions will take place at the Barton Hill Settlement, BS5 0AX.

Refreshments will be provided. Please get in touch for more info or to book on to our Newly Diagnosed Group.

HIV Awareness Training

HIV-related stigma is one of the largest challenges facing HIV positive people. Myths, fear and miseducation can all contribute.

Our HIV Awareness Training busts these myths, dispels the fear and educates so that positive people can live in a world that doesn't discriminate. It gives professionals and individuals better understanding of HIV.

Training sessions are delivered by positive people and trained professionals and are tailored to meet the needs of your organisation.

If this is something your organisation could benefit from, please get in touch.



Bristol City Council proposes to cut Brigstowe's funding

In January 2017, Bristol City Council made a proposal to stop funding our HIV Support Service despite the city recently having become a high prevalence area.

The news came just weeks after Terrence Higgins Trust announced the forthcoming closure of its centre on Old Market, due to changes in NHS services, meaning there will be little or no specialist support for HIV positive people living in or around Bristol.

Over 2 in every 1000 people are now living with the virus in Bristol and this number is only increasing. Although, medications have improved, living with HIV is far from easy with stigma and discrimination still a prominent issue for those living with the virus.

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We're calling on people to start lobbying.

You can write to your councillors and your MPs about the importance of HIV specific services. If you feel comfortable using personal details, please do. This makes the argument much more punchy!

If you want a letter template to send, please get in touch with us.

Other things that you can do:

- Share our Twitter posts!
- Follow us on Facebook
- Become an HIV activist by becoming a member of National AIDS Trust

If you would like more information on the funding cuts, or if you are worried that these proposals will affect you directly and would like to talk to someone, please get in touch.

LGBT History Month



February marks LGBT History Month in the UK. This is a chance for us to look back on our history through a rainbow-coloured lens: to see the stories that were omitted from popular history, to celebrate the heroes who were not sung about, to make the lives of LGBT people more visible.

It was 50 years ago this year that homosexuality became legal. Only this year gay men who had been put on the sex offenders register received an official pardon from parliament. There clearly is still a fair way to go to reach equality.

Looking back on the history of LGBT+ communities and the experiences of LGBT+ people can help us better understand where we are now and how to move forward.

So how does this link to HIV? The AIDS crisis of the 1980s was a landmark point in LGBT+ history. The LGBT+ community, tragically, lost many of its community to AIDS. The epidemic mobilised gay men and lesbian women to fight hard for rights and drug treatments for people living with HIV.

In present day UK, anti-retroviral treatment is easily accessible and incredibly effective. But stigma, discrimination and misunderstanding of HIV are still prevalent; members of the LGBT+ community alive at the time of the AIDS epidemic still mourn people they have lost; as a community we are still overcoming trauma.

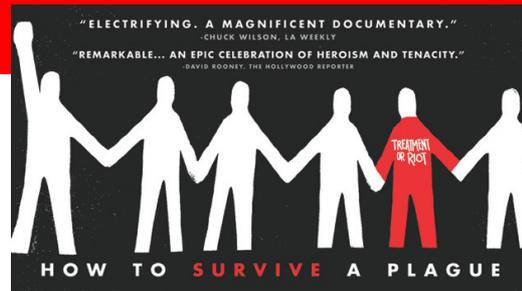
If you want to get involved in LGBT History Month in Bristol there are loads of events going on throughout the city. You can check out Out Bristol's website for details of all of the events going on.

www.outbristol.co.uk

We're also organising an event! Details over the page...



HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE



Tuesday 21st February, 7pm, Trinity Centre, BS2 0NW

Film screening and panel discussion.

£6 waged, £3 unwaged

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An evening of AIDS Actisim, LGBT History and discussion.

How to Survive a Plague is an award nominated documentary following the conception and life



of ACT UP, an AIDS activism group that made history. Not only did they win rights for HIV-positive people, saving thousands of lives but they were also ground-breaking activists, using organisational structures and campaigns that are drawn upon all over the world.

Following the film we are hosting a discussion with HIV activists ACT UP London and Bristol-based HIV advocates. As well as the themes of the film, we'll be talking about what action needs to be taken now and how we can do that.

Tickets are available on the door. All money made will help support HIV services in Bristol. Please note this is a public event.

www.eventbrite.co.uk/how-to-survive-a-plague-tickets-31155786797

We need to talk about domestic violence, HIV and gender

The Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: '*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.*'

Domestic violence can affect anyone. There are some studies that suggest that you are more likely to experience domestic violence if you are living with HIV. We are seeing growing numbers of men and women who are accessing our services reporting domestic violence.

We want to make it clear that domestic violence can affect anyone, regardless of gender, sexuality or HIV status. It is never your fault and there is always help available for you.

It might be that you need someone to talk to, it might be that you need some practical advice about leaving a relationship. There are many phone lines that offer practical advice and emotional support around domestic violence.

Next Link 01179250680

Bristol based organisation that offer support to women who have experienced domestic violence and to women and men who have experienced sexual violence.

Mankind Initiative 01823334244

A confidential helpline for male victims of domestic violence.

Men's Advice Line 0808801327

Advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence.

Galop 0207704204

National LGBT domestic violence helpline.

Womensaid 08082000247

Offer support and advice to women experiencing domestic violence.

Womankind 01179166461

Offer listening support to women, including women experiencing domestic violence.

GET INVOLVED!?

Here at Brigstowe we're very aware that things are done best if they are done together. We have staff, volunteers and clients helping at every level of the organisation and we're thankful to all of them!

Below are a couple more opportunities to get involved. Please get in touch for more information.

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brigstowe are looking for an organised and diligent volunteer Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Responsibilities will include taking minutes, preparing the agenda, assisting with the management of Brigstowe's AGM and membership and contributing to the organisation.

PUBLICITY VOLUNTEER

I know it might not feel like it quite yet but festival season will soon be upon us. Brigstowe sets up shop at a few sites over the South West to publicise our services and raise awareness of HIV. We're looking for sociable volunteers to join our publicity team!

All volunteers will receive full induction, HIV info pack and ongoing supervision.

LIKE WRITING?

Have you got something to say that our readers might find useful? Living with HIV and want to share your story? We're on the look out for people to contribute to our quarterly newsletter. We offer a supportive and encouraging environment. Help with editing and constructive feedback will be provided.

HIV INFORMATION:

HIV and ageing

HIV and ageing is a growing issue. Thanks to accessible and effective anti-retroviral treatment, we are seeing the first generation of people age with HIV.



One third of people living with HIV are now over 50, this can be attributed to effective medication meaning people are living long-lives with HIV but also to record rates of new diagnoses in over 50s group.

We're seeing the first wave of people age with HIV, so the issues that will present are relatively unknown to us. People growing older with HIV are more likely to experience multiple health conditions than the general population. There have been several studies conducted looking at the concerns HIV+ people have in growing older with the virus. Concerns around access to care, isolation and loneliness are high amongst people living with HIV. These concerns are even more prevalent in women growing older with HIV. For women, there are also additional concerns about how HIV may affect menopause.

So, now we have some information, what do we do with it?

Brigstowe are working hard to keep informed about the issues that are specific to people ageing with HIV. We are working closely with Bristol Ageing Better to ensure there is appropriate support for HIV positive as they grow older.

We are also delivering HIV awareness training sessions to organisations and community groups, including those who support older people.

