

# Stand With People Affected By HIV



## HIV Manifesto for the General Election 2017

We have come a long way since the 1980s. While stigma and discrimination remain, HIV is now a long-term condition and individuals are living with HIV into old age. HIV affects individuals of all ages with 95% of people living with HIV of working age. HIV treatment in the UK is excellent, but not everyone living with HIV is doing well. The number of people diagnosed with HIV each year remains high and far too many people are diagnosed late. Services which help people living with HIV manage their condition are facing continued funding cuts.

**We have come so far. We cannot stop now.**

We are calling on the next Government to:

- 1. Commit to tackling the stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV.**
- 2. Fully fund HIV and sexual health services to meet the needs of local communities\*.**
- 3. Recognise the importance of prevention to a sustainable health and social care system by increasing investment in public health services\*.**
- 4. Equip schools with the resources they need to ensure that high-quality, age-appropriate, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT)-inclusive sex and relationships education is taught to all young people in all schools\*.**
- 5. Make PrEP available to all individuals at risk of HIV in the UK\*.**
- 6. Develop a fair benefits system that meets the needs of people living with HIV whether in or out of work.**
- 7. Ensure that the health and social care system is equipped to meet the needs of a population ageing with HIV\*.**

*\*The general election is electing MPs to the House of Commons, from across the UK. The House of Commons legislates for health and social care, and education, in England only. The devolved Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland legislate in these areas.*

## **Commit to tackling the stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV**

People living with HIV in the UK continue to face stigma and experience HIV-related discrimination. HIV discrimination is seen in all aspects of an individual's life – from employers, local community members, police and worryingly the health and social care system. UK research has shown that one in five people living with HIV have experienced verbal harassment or threats. A third reported having their HIV status disclosed without consent and one in five reported being treated differently by GPs.

Tackling stigma is vital to improving the lives of people living with HIV and is integral to tackling HIV.

## **Fully fund HIV and sexual health services to meet the needs of local communities**

Ensuring that everyone who needs them has easy access to prevention, testing, treatment and care for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is essential for the health of individuals as well as communities. Access to sexual health services lowers the long-term costs to the NHS, and helps to reduce onward transmission of infections.

Good HIV care isn't just about medical treatment. Every year, one in three people living with HIV access support services which help them manage their lifelong condition effectively. But future funding for these services - often provided by community-based organisations - is uncertain. In England, services have been cut by 28% nationwide in just one year.

## **Recognise the importance of prevention to a sustainable health and social care system by increasing investment in public health services**

Preventing HIV infections not only benefits individuals but saves the NHS money. Recent reports that a handful of London sexual health clinics experienced a drop in new HIV diagnoses shows that a downturn in the HIV epidemic is possible – but only when we use all the tools available. We have not seen the steep decline repeated across the UK.

Over the course of the last Parliament, funding for local HIV prevention in the UK's highest prevalence Local Authorities dropped by a third. We know what works to prevent HIV. Yet political will - and investment in prevention as well as public health services - is still lacking.

The health and social care system needs a radical increase in investment in prevention. The next Government needs to show leadership and truly put public health at the heart of our health services.

## **Equip schools with the resources they need to ensure that high-quality, age-appropriate, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT)-inclusive sex and relationships education is taught to all young people in all schools**

Statutory high quality, age-appropriate, LGBT-inclusive and gender sensitive sex and relationships education needs to be taught to all young people in all schools in order to equip them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about the kinds of relationships they want to have. Education must be LGBT-inclusive because LGBT young people are more likely to experience poor sexual and mental health. With rising rates of STIs among

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young people it is essential for young people's health and wellbeing that they receive this education. All young people need to be prepared for the physical and emotional changes that they go through during puberty regardless of their gender or their sexuality, and all children need to be in receipt of information to keep them safe both on and offline.

### **Make PrEP available to all individuals at risk of HIV in the UK**

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a highly effective way of preventing people from acquiring HIV and involves people who are HIV negative taking anti-HIV drugs when they are at risk of exposure to HIV. Like HIV treatment, HIV prevention has evolved over time and, although condoms are effective at preventing HIV, consistent condom use is not always a reality. Those at risk of HIV transmission need a range of options and choices to best meet their individual needs and circumstances and PrEP – alongside other prevention interventions such as condom use, behaviour change and regular HIV testing – must be a part of this.

### **Develop a fair benefits system that meets the needs of people living with HIV whether in or out of work**

A significant minority of people living with HIV will experience long-term health problems and disabilities which create barriers to employment and participation. People living with HIV are also more likely to be living in poverty which can have a serious impact on their ability to successfully manage treatment and health demands.

A fair benefits system would accurately assess HIV-related barriers to work and participation, without causing undue stress to individuals or the health service, and provide a decent rate of financial support for those who need it.

### **Ensure that the health and social care system is equipped to meet the needs of a population ageing with HIV**

With an ageing population and the success of HIV treatment, people aged 50 and over now make up over a third of all those accessing HIV care in the UK, and will make up 50% of this population by 2028. Our health and social care system is not yet meeting the lifelong needs of this group. More needs to be done to ensure that people living with HIV are able to access good quality, non-discriminatory care with dignity. All parts of the health and social care system need the right resources, information and training to provide the best care outcomes, stamp out discrimination and to meet the needs of a generation ageing with HIV.



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