Chelsea and Westminster Peer Support in Clinics
Project Description

About Positively UK

Positively UK provides peer-led support, advocacy and information to everyone living with HIV to effectively manage any aspect of their diagnosis, care and life with HIV. We believe that people living with HIV are best placed to advocate for their own needs. Working in partnership with the NHS, our peer work is integrated at clinics across London; 90% of our staff are living with HIV. We run a range of specialised peer-led support services for women, heterosexual people, gay men, young people, and those ageing with HIV. We host events and workshops for recently diagnosed people – those who are planning parenthood or currently pregnant, including talks with activists, clinicians and life coaches with the purpose of supporting people and help them meet peers and form meaningful friendships. We offer OCN accredited training to people with HIV to deliver efficient peer support and collaborate with clinics and voluntary organisations around the UK to establish peer support programmes.

Project Description

The overall aim of the project is to improve the health and quality of life of people living with HIV, accessing care in Chelsea and Westminster clinics, through high quality peer support.

The project will be tailored to the specific needs of people who have disengaged with care. Peer interventions will provide emotional, practical/social support, education related to living well with HIV and navigation through the health and social care system.

We know that disengagement with care is more acute among some people: for example women - low income and people from Black Minority Ethnic groups, young and ageing populations, those diagnosed late, and trans people. This contributes to disproportionate high rates of HIV related morbidity and mortality, and concurrent health conditions, especially for those living into older age with HIV.

The project will be key to addressing the six themes of successful ageing for people living with HIV: accepting limitations, staying positive, maintaining social supports, taking responsibility, living a healthy lifestyle, and engaging in meaningful activities. Peer support can also help overcoming internalised stigma, with the potential to influence external stigma within communities and the NHS.

The peer case work coordinator will work closely with a team of volunteer peer mentors, providing peer support in the clinics, both through one to one and group work. They will work collaboratively with Positively UK’s Volunteer Coordinator, and partners organisations NAZ, and PlusHealth, facilitating access to local services and online peer support.