

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual review. We hope it gives you a real understanding of both our work and our approach to supporting our communities. Our year was set against a backdrop of continuing promising news in the world of HIV.

There have been unprecedented and significant reductions in new HIV diagnosis never seen before. London has achieved the UNAIDS targets of 90:90:90 - 90% of Londoners living with HIV know their diagnosis, 90% of those Londoners are on HIV medication, and 90% of those Londoners being virally suppressed (and therefore not being able to pass on HIV).

Treatment as Prevention (TasP), Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), condom use and HIV testing is clearly working.

U=U - Undetectable=Untransmittable - continuing to be a powerful message that people living with HIV who are virally suppressed cannot pass HIV onto their sexual partners.

However, we know through the people we work with and continue to see everyday in our support and prevention services at our offices, in HIV clinics and out in the community that the job is not finished and that

We're Not Done Yet.

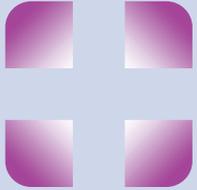
We know that we are not done yet as Public Health England's (PHE) epidemiological reports show that not all communities are benefiting from the great news of such significant reductions in new HIV diagnosis, people are still undiagnosed and the rates of late diagnosis with its consequential impact on individual and public health are still too high.

We at Positive East want the story of HIV to be an inclusive one of success involving a legacy where no person or community is left behind. This is why the work of the Charity, embedded within the communities of East London and integrated within the local HIV health and social care economy, continues to be just as important as ever.

I hope you enjoy the read and perhaps will consider becoming part of the Positive East community, supporting our work as a volunteer or making a financial contribution.

We would very much welcome your support, helping us to meet the challenges that HIV presents the communities we support.

Mark Santos
Executive Director



PositiveEast

Positive East's mission is to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities affected by HIV.

CONTENTS

02

Welcome
Mark Santos

07

Year in Review
Alex Foott

11

Chat with Pat
Our new chat bot



12

UK AIDS
Memorial Quilt



21

Volunteering
Stewart Turnbull

23

Fundraising
Alex Foott



Positive East's Vision is a world where people living with HIV

10

Health & Well-being
Chantal Busbridge

11

Counselling
Andre Smith



17

World AIDS Day Red Run
Ian Montgomery

19

Peer Support
Phillip Dzwonkiewicz

20

HIV Testing & Prevention
Massimo Nardi

26

Re:Assure
Joanne McCarthy

27

HIV Voices
Hugh Wyld

29

About
Us



can fulfil their potential, free from stigma and discrimination



Above: Film stills from Talking Together
Films by: Anna de Guia-Eriksson

[Stepney Green East London]



Year in Review

Positive East has been East London's primary HIV charity for nearly 3 decades providing support from the point of an HIV diagnosis into sustained independence.

For **28 years**, we have been at the forefront of HIV care, providing essential support and prevention services to more than **3,000 people** each year. Last year, we delivered **8,541 hours** of work, supporting **1,079 people** through our wide-ranging services and holistic approach – providing information to the community and support from the first point of an HIV diagnosis into long term good health.

Working at the very heart of the local community, our Prevention and Testing team delivered over **2,100 free rapid HIV tests** in **28 community testing locations** across East London. In addition, our Prevention and Testing team has developed our ground-breaking Faith Forum which brought together **50 faith leaders** in May to raise awareness of HIV and to help us develop prevention and support strategies for faith communities.

Our Support Groups provide an open space, free from judgement. **183 people** were able to talk with each other about the challenges that living with HIV can bring. By discussing topics such as stigma, past traumas and the unfamiliar territory of managing a recent HIV diagnosis, these groups help build confidence, improve well-being and provide a foundation for lasting friendships.

We also offer a comprehensive Counselling service, including clinical psychology and one-to-one sessions, which helps people overcome challenges to living full and empowered lives. Our **12 volunteer counsellors** provided more than **1,426 hours** of counselling support to **104 people**. Within this work, our Re:Assure Women's Project is London's only tailored support service for HIV positive female asylum seekers and refugees and women who have experienced severe forms of past trauma and abuse.

The project provided **82 women** with **378 hours** of support via clinical psychology and group support.

Delivering **519 hours** of one-to-one bespoke support, our Peer Support programme helped **217 people** navigate and improve their ability to manage an HIV diagnosis while increasing their confidence levels. Through sharing experiences, our Peer Mentor Volunteers helped them build support networks to tackle HIV stigma and cultural taboos and overcome the barriers that prevent many HIV positive people from living well with HIV.

Our Advice Service (the only AQS accredited advice service of its kind in London) supported more than **600 people** to help them address their real and impactful experiences of poverty, social security issues and poor housing. This ensures people have a solid platform in place upon which to build their health and well-being.

To provide a wide range of support, our holistic Health & Well-being programme enhances the practical support we provide. The programme's activities offer tools to achieve and embrace independence, including free access to our fitness services, massage therapy, yoga classes, ear acupuncture and meditation sessions as well as regular workshops, courses and seminars that explore topics such as dating and relationships, disclosure and healthy eating. We delivered workshops to nearly **100 people**.

In the Spring of 2019, we started a new regular **LGBT+ Film Night**, delivered monthly at Redbridge Central Library. These nights are completely free and open to everyone, with special guest speakers and discussions following each screening, designed to encourage conversations and learn more about the LGBT+ experience.

Working in partnership with HIV Voices we held a series of **8 workshops** designed to investigate and tackle HIV stigma and develop messages about PrEP and U=U through the experiences of being in mixed HIV status relationships via spoken word. **5** personal and powerful spoken word pieces were developed and have since

been filmed and performed across East London over the summer at black African community festivals, UK Black Pride and our Positive Feast.

We recently launched our brand-new sexual health chat bot - **Pat**. This is one of the UK's first sexual health chat bots and we could not be more thrilled to have pioneered the technology.

Positive East is a community-run organisation and our **100 dedicated volunteers** are a keystone in our work. They generously donated **12,000 hours** to help us provide HIV testing, outreach services, peer support, counselling, information and advice as well as running workshops, seminars and events that help us offer a robust and comprehensive approach to improving the lives of those living with HIV. Furthermore, this year we were thrilled to have been successful at achieving the coveted **Investing in Volunteers award!**

We are also the proud hosts of the UK's largest World AIDS Day event - the World AIDS Day **RED RUN** - which brings together the community to create a groundswell of support for the HIV sector. More than **2,000 people attended** last year's event, raising over **£125,000** for the **40** HIV charities taking part.

Following on from the success of the RED RUN, we have focused our efforts on growing our own repertoire of community engagement events. 2019 saw the launch of our first ever **skydiving event**, with **6** of our supporters taking on the jump, as well as the return of our **KRUSH** event - bringing together local businesses to rally support for our work and encourage their customers and patrons to donate to the charity.

Positive Feast is our own spin on the traditional gala dinner fundraiser. Set within an exciting and immersive space Positive Feast explored and revealed Positive East through the use of light, colour, music, film, spoken word and art. Following the 3 course meal and prosecco reception, an exciting live auction and raffle raised an incredible **£50,000** for the charity. Thank you again to last year's Positive Feast sponsors - the FSCS, Adecco and Aon.



What does 'self-care' really mean anyway?

Chantal Busbridge, Health and Well-being Coordinator, explains:

The term 'self-care' was added to Oxford's Online Dictionary back in 2017 and is defined as 'The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress'. One of the most interesting things about working within a Health & Well-being service is its variety – well-being can mean so many different things to so many different people, and my job as Health & Well-being Coordinator is to present as many opportunities as possible for people to connect with self-care, and enhance their mental, emotional and physical well-being.

Self-care in recent times has sometimes been portrayed in caricature, with images of indulgent bubble baths and scented candles (which are lovely too!), but the meaning behind the self-care act is so much more than this. Self-care is about making an active choice to engage in an activity that will enhance your well-being. Far from being indulgent or selfish, there is an acknowledgment in this act that by protecting your own well-being, you are better equipped to care for those around you too. As the saying goes, 'You can't pour from an empty cup'!

Within Health & Well-being at Positive East, we are always thinking of new ways to offer clients opportunities to make this active choice to engage in self-care across mental, emotional and physical well-being. This might be via complementary therapies, use of our gym, or interactive workshops on issues as varied as money management, boosting self-esteem or sharing experiences on dating and relationships. I also believe it is important for our clients to see self-care modelled amongst staff too, which is why we open our courses (on Mindfulness for example) to clients and staff alike.

Like most skills, self-care requires planning and practice, and isn't something that will just 'happen' unfortunately! Self-care should always be something that enhances; that gives to us without taking anything away. So why not start your self-care practice right now: what will you do as an act of self-care today?





A brief introduction into counselling

Andre Smith
Counselling Coordinator

The history of treating mental health concerns can be traced all the way back to the ancient Greeks, who were the first to identify mental illness as a medical condition, rather than a sign of irritated deities!

And while their understanding of mental health treatment wasn't always spot on (blood-letting for psychosis was considered quite normal!) they did recognise the value of encouraging words.

Today, most people trace modern-day psychotherapy back to Sigmund Freud in the 1800s, who concluded that mental illness was the result of keeping thoughts or memories in the unconscious. And whilst many of his theories and ideas are still largely recognised today, therapy has of course continued to evolve.

During the 1950s, Carl Rogers developed a new approach which we know today as person-centred therapy. Rogers explored the power dissonance dynamic that was often played out in counselling rooms, i.e. the therapist was perceived as a powerful expert, whilst the client was seen as a powerless victim! Rogers proposed the transmission of warmth, genuineness, and acceptance from therapist to client.

This latter-day Rogerian ethos around accepting and respecting a client's experience and autonomy is a key philosophy of Positive East's own counselling service. The twelve dedicated volunteer counsellors who support and enable our service very much embrace the core conditions proposed by Rogers (congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard) to facilitate and support clients into helpful change, greater insight into their lives, and an increased sense of control and autonomy.

We very much see our clients as experts themselves because they are living their experience 24/7 whilst we as counsellors are invited into their world for 50 minutes once a week! That said, clients have often fed back that the benefits and opportunities to process, to heal, and to grow in self-knowledge in any given 50-minute session can last a lifetime.

I am here!

I am strong

U=U means

I am Undetectable

I am Untransmittable

I am confident that one day there will be a cure

I can walk with my head held high

I am alive and kicking

I am happy

I am a conqueror

I am no different to anyone else

I am here!

Eighteen months ago, Positive East embarked on a new and pioneering project to support the good sexual health of the community that utilises state of the art chat bot technology to provide real time information and signposting. Fast forward to June 2019 and Positive East launches the UK's first sexual health chat bot.

Marking a turning point for Positive East, and for the wider sexual health provider community, Pat was a ground-breaking attempt to pilot this new approach to provide online sexual health support.

Designed as a signposting tool (Pat does not diagnose or try to replace human interaction in the form of counselling or peer support) Pat can successfully answer more than 1,400 intents. This means that Pat understands a series of key words and phrases and then determines what information (or answers) you are seeking and responds with a pre-scripted message(s).

However, for Pat to be able to answer a wide range of questions and signpost properly, Positive East - along with our tech partner Fintek, community partners, staff and volunteers - undertook months of community insight and research into the usability of Pat. This helped to frame Pat's initial development. Information about contraception, condoms, HIV, PEP, PrEP and STI symptoms were all recurring themes highlighted during the 18 month development process.

Pat is now proudly hosted on our website and chats with around 200 people per month, providing us with an additional tool to provide extra support.

Chat with Pat!
www.positiveeast.org.uk/talktopat/

Where can I get an HIV Test?

You can get a free test at a sexual health clinic, your GP or an HIV community test centre - would you like to locate your nearest clinic?

What does STI stand for?

STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. It refers to a range of infections usually spread through sex, including anal, vaginal, frontal and oral sex.

There are many different STIs but some common ones are chlamydia, gonorrhoea, genital warts, genital herpes, pubic lice, scabies and syphilis.

The condom broke last night!

If the condom breaks or falls off during sex, or if you have sex without a condom, there's a risk you and your partner could be exposed to STIs or HIV if they are not undetectable. If there's a chance one of you could get pregnant, you can get emergency contraception.



Re:Assure Women's Project
Joanne McCarthy, Clinical Psychologist/Re:Assure Project Lead
Alex Foott, Fundraising Officer



Joanne McCarthy has worked at Positive East for three years. Joanne leads our Re:Assure Women's Project and sits down with our Fundraising Officer Alex Foott to explain one of the aspects of Re:Assure that she enjoys most - the "Self Expression, Sex and Relationships" course.

As part of the group, an amazing clinical nurse specialist from the NHS attends to talk to the women about their health. This includes approaching various issues such as past abuse and ways of moving forward, U=U, (Undetectable = Untransmittable confidence in relationships and sexual health.

// One of my favourite sessions of the group that I run is one that focuses on the differences between relationships in the UK vs. all the countries where the women attending are from.

Many different topics come up including the view of abuse within different countries, the view of possessiveness and unfaithfulness, what women thought about being 'looked after' by men and many past relationships issues.

These conversations also start discussions about other topics including violence, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), independence, safety, unfaithfulness and trust in relationships.

The Re:Assure Women's Project is a dedicated programme for refugee, asylum seeking or migrant women who are living with HIV and who have experienced traumatic events.

Re:Assure supports women on their journey to overcome traumatic experiences and is the only one of its kind in London.

This session paves the way for a speaker from a women's only shop (stocking various sex aids/toys) who attends to talk about sex and self-pleasure which is very well received.

The women have said that the group reawakens resources and helps them to realise their potential and build self-esteem and confidence.

It also helps the women gain new knowledge, skills and strategies to assist with coping and working towards addressing the most traumatic experiences. **//**

For more information about Re:Assure please visit www.positiveeast.org.uk



UK AIDS Memorial Quilt

In June 1987, a small group of strangers gathered in a San Francisco store front to document the lives they feared history would neglect. Their goal was to create a memorial for those who had died of AIDS, and to thereby help people understand the devastating impact of the disease.

This meeting served as the foundation for the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The AIDS Quilt would soon be a global movement reaching and memorialising individuals from around the world. In total, there are now 48,000 individual sections that form the global AIDS Memorial Quilt.

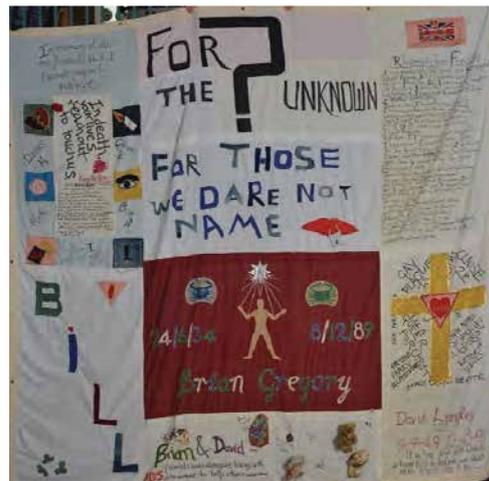
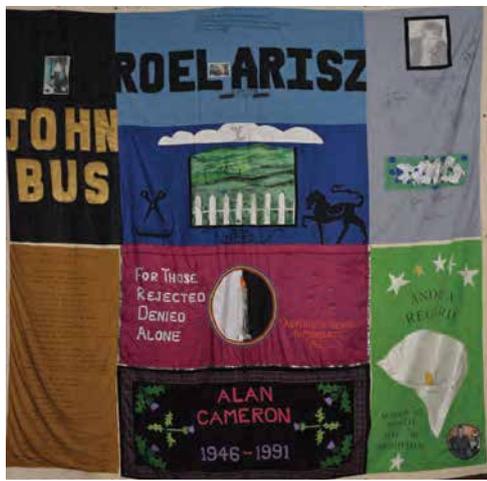
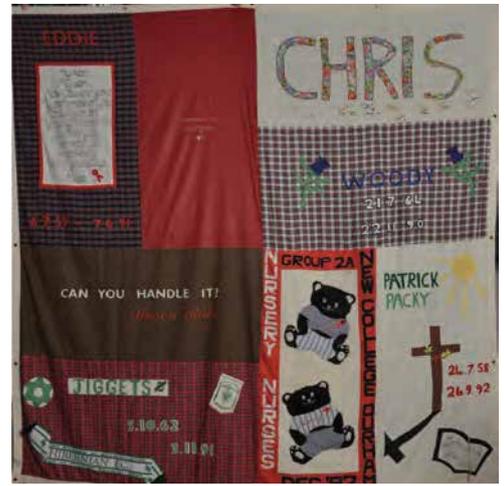
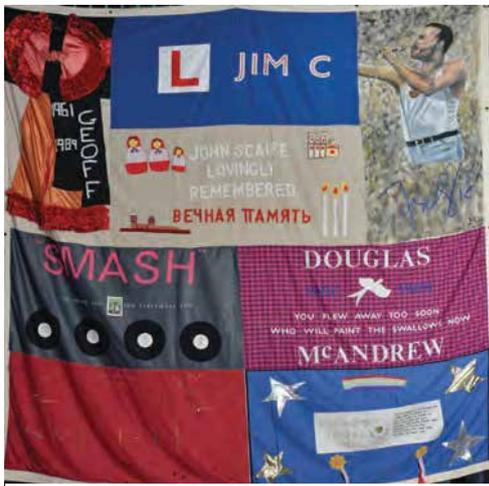
In 1991, the AIDS Memorial Quilt was established in the UK and commemorates and holds the names and stories of some of those who died of AIDS in the UK in the 80s and 90s.

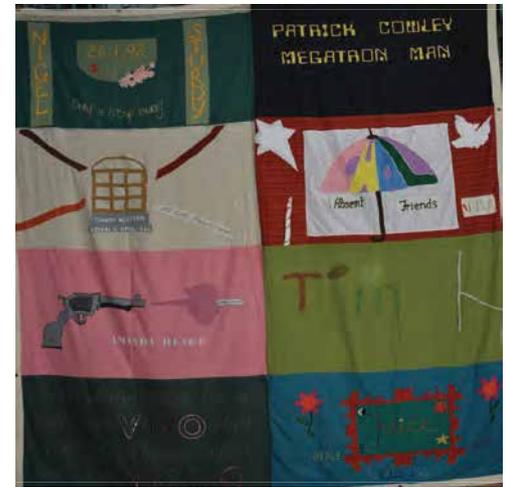
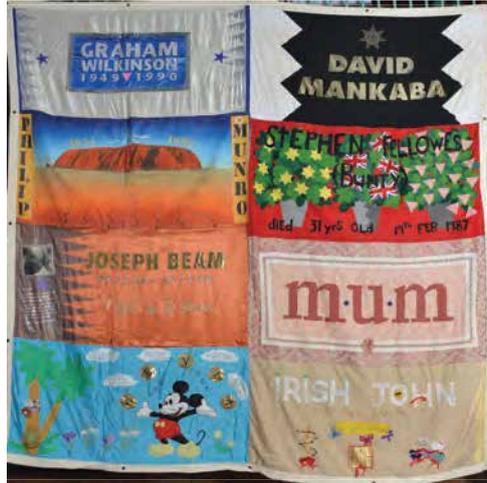
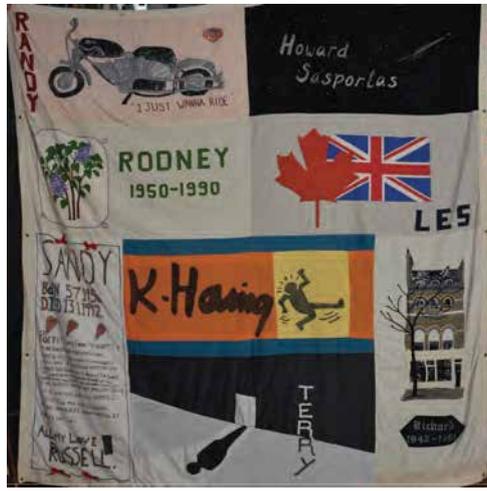
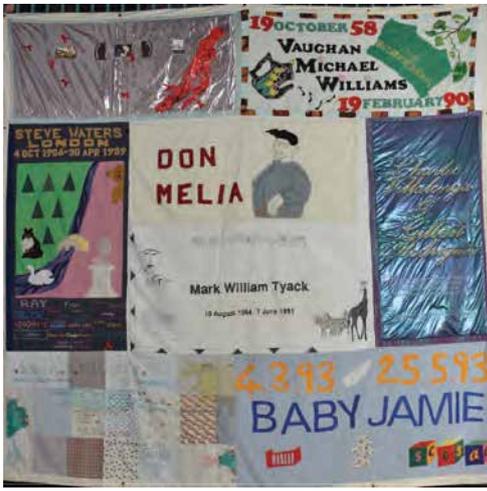
The UK AIDS Memorial Quilt consists of 48 12' x 12' panels representing the lives of 384 individuals. Within each panel are 8 individual sections (6' x 3') that have been lovingly created and hand-stitched by friends and family to serve as a powerful and personal tribute.

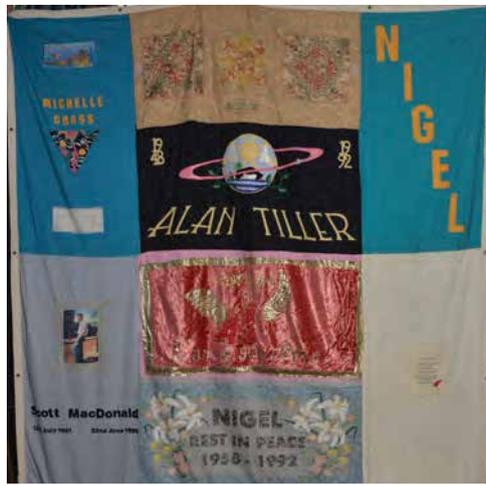
Today the Quilt is a strong visual reminder of the AIDS pandemic and is an irreplaceable piece of social history.

Positive East is part of the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt Partnership along with The Food Chain, Sahir House, PositivelyUK, Terrence Higgins Trust and the George House Trust. The partnership aims to restore, display and archive the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt for future generations.

www.aidsquiltuk.org







Jacques Buisson
Love
GHOST
Sonya Peter 1945-1986
ZOOM

1960 JOHN CRONCHER 1993
1969 VAUGHN TOULOUSE 1991
1959 FRANK M'KEWAN 1992

Goe Sennott

CHRISTOPHER M. GRAN
1952 - 1992
THE THINGS HE LOVED IN LIFE
HAPPY BIRTHDAY CHRISTOPHER

JAY
in our
ASBA
Euro
AIDS ribbon

tmr
1965
1995
sun, moon, flowers, lips, figure

FREDDIE
BE NOT GONE

WITH LOVE FROM MUM, DAD, DEBBIE, VIKI, JIMMY & GARY KING
Penny
T-shirt with photo, heart, butterfly, horse, tower



WORLD AIDS DAY RED RUN



Ian Montgomery
 Head of Fundraising and Communications
 Positive East

Clockwise from Top: Denim and London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Madam Storm; Chantal, Antonio, Alix, Yan, Resty and Carlo. Photos from the 2018 Red Run

TAKE ACTION LACE UP!

On Saturday 30th November, the 10th annual World AIDS Day RED RUN will return to Victoria park to raise awareness and funding for HIV charities across the UK.

The World AIDS Day RED RUN takes place against the backdrop of a momentous time in the world of HIV. We have seen a dramatic fall in new HIV diagnosis, particularly amongst gay men in London, the UK has exceeded the UNAIDS 90-90-90 target (90% of those living with HIV are diagnosed, 90% of those diagnosed are on treatment, and 90% of those on treatment are adhering). Undetectable = Untransmittable is a medical statement of fact and PrEP works!

However, amongst this good news, the challenge remains that not everyone and not all communities are benefiting. HIV stigma is still a reality and there are far too many people undiagnosed or diagnosed late. 50,000 Londoners (103,000 in the UK) are living with HIV and HIV support services are still needed.

Now is certainly not the time for us to stand down. Take Action. Lace Up. We're not done yet!

On Saturday 30th November, thousands will come together to take action against misguided budget cuts, to take action against HIV stigma and to take action to ensure everyone knows that U=U and to demand that PrEP is made available to all who need it.

We'll take action to stand collectively, remembering our loved ones and the generation lost to HIV.

Together we will lace up in solidarity.

The World AIDS Day RED RUN is more than a 10k run or 5k walk. It has now become one of the UK's largest World AIDS Day events. In addition to the run/walk, there will be a display of 4 panels of the UK AIDS Memorial Quilt, a pop-up AIDS memorial and a small display of HIV and AIDS public health poster campaigns from Wellcome Collection and hot Starbucks for everyone.

Drag superstars DENIM will return to host the event and the EAGLE will power the entertainment with DJs from Horse Meat Disco. Everyone is welcome, and we encourage people to bring their friends and family to celebrate with us.

This year the RED RUN will support HIV charities across the UK, all doing brilliant work. Positive East is proud to host an event that benefits the sector more widely and that shows our unified voice and commitment to supporting those living with HIV.

To register, please visit redrun.org.uk. The £18 registration fee to participate is a small price for the impact your presence will make.

The 2019 World AIDS Day RED RUN is proudly sponsored by: ViiV Healthcare, Gilead, the FSCS, Royal Bank of Canada, Interbank, the Eagle and Starbucks.

With special thanks to Anne McLellan, the Wellcome Collection and Mark Oakley.

Peer Support

By Phillip Dzwonkiewicz, Peer Support Worker

Six months ago, when I joined the Positive East team, I didn't realise that I had already been providing what I now understand to be Peer Support for my friends as well as others within my social circles around all the trials that can come with a new HIV diagnosis.

I have been HIV positive for 12 years.

It is scientifically proven that Peer Support works! Why? It's very simple. It is very empowering to speak with someone who has experienced similar issues and hear how they came to terms with an HIV diagnosis and are now living well with HIV. Through sharing my experiences, and the tools that I have learned, I hope that I'm able to support others to build happy and healthy lives.

When I've conducted Registration & Assessment sessions for clients who are new to Positive East and are hoping to benefit from our services, I have often been taken aback by the look on their face when I tell them that I am also living with HIV and have been for 12 years. Their expression changes from something of despair and worry to "what, really?" They are able to see someone else who has faced the challenges they are presented with and who has made it through to the other side - living *well* with HIV.

To say that I'm grateful to be involved in each person's journey is a real understatement. I'm honoured and humbled to be providing Peer Support and helping clients learn to not just live well with HIV but live fabulously and thrive!

The Peer Support team also offers and runs various Support Groups for those who would like to share, learn and heal in a group setting. Our Support Groups compliment well the one to one support we provide via Peer Support. Currently we offer groups for women, gay men and a mixed group and for those who are newly coming to terms with an HIV diagnosis.

We have come a long way in the 37 years since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, but we are certainly not done yet supporting people to live well with HIV!

But for that journey, no one needs to go it alone
- our Peer Support team is here!

HIV Testing & Outreach

By Massimo Nardi, HIV Testing and Prevention Worker

In January when I joined Positive East as HIV Prevention Worker for Gay, Bisexual and MSM (Men who have sex with Men) focusing on the borough of Redbridge, I knew that I took up a challenge. As is often the case outside the central boroughs, in Redbridge there is no venue that caters specifically for the LGBT+ community. The nearest club night takes place in Romford, in the neighbouring borough of Havering.

So how could I reach out to the people I needed to work with?

Being a cinema lover, the first idea that came to my mind was a film night in the Redbridge Central Library in Ilford. Quickly the Redbridge Central Library and our friends at the Redbridge Rainbow Community became partners for what would become an ongoing event. The Redbridge Central Library hosts the event and provides the films from their catalogue when available.

After a few months of preparation, we started in May 2019 and screened the incredibly moving film - 120 BPM, a French film that is about HIV activism, love, loss and hope followed by an open discussion with Roland Chesters, an HIV activist himself.

The event is meant as a safe space for queer people from all walks of life to get together and to learn more about Positive East's services and HIV and STI testing locations in the borough.

Since then, we have been holding it every month, screening films like *Pride*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Moonlight* and *But I'm a Cheerleader*, always with an interesting speaker afterwards sparking discussion and debate on the topics raised by the films.

Our audience is growing time after time thanks to the help of our wonderful staff and volunteers and the hope is to reach out to as many LGBT+ community members as possible.

For future film nights please visit
www.positiveeast.org.uk/calendar



We're #NotDoneYet!

Positive East's Volunteer Manager Stewart Turnbull explains the importance of volunteering as we're not done yet.

Stewart Turnbull

Here at Positive East we are, without a doubt, blessed with the most wonderful volunteers. It is no secret that we could not do everything we do without their vital support. Indeed, the first genesis of Positive East over 28 years ago, was founded at the grassroots level by volunteers. The harsh reality being that there were no support services and no medications available for those diagnosed with HIV.

The medical profession was operating blind, they had no idea what they were up against. Consequently, it fell to those diagnosed with HIV, along with their lovers, friends and families to organise, for themselves, the support that was, sadly, lacking elsewhere.

The early 20th century saw a huge development in volunteering again, with the establishment of organisations such as the Lions and Rotary Club. Here, those successful in business sought to use their talents and time for the benefit of the wider community.

It was only in the latter half of the last century, and the start of this one, that we started to see volunteering being more formalised. Local volunteer centres were established along with organisations such as Volunteering England, NCVO and the likes. Today, we think of charitable organisations as being part of the wider 'voluntary sector' and volunteering is firmly embedded in the fabric of our society.



This got me thinking about the history of volunteering, in general. I was surprised to learn that the first use of the verb to 'volunteer' can be traced back to 1755, pertaining to someone [probably men] offering themselves for military service. It was derived from the noun 'volunteer', which comes from the Middle French 'voluntaire'.

However, it wasn't until the 19th century, when organisations such as the YMCA and the Salvation Army established themselves, to help those in need, using volunteers to fulfil their mission, that we can begin to recognise something more aligned to what we now consider volunteering in the modern context. A model of volunteering based on altruism and a desire to help others.

People's motivations for volunteering are as wide and varied as the number of volunteer opportunities there are. Some people simply want to 'give something back'. Others, perhaps, wish to gain experience whilst preparing for a change of career. Often, students are required to volunteer in order gain work experience as part of their qualification.

It is wonderful to think that our fabulous family of volunteers here at Positive East are connected though history with those that have gone before and, more importantly, continue the fine tradition of volunteering.

A huge thanks to them all!



Positive East

Join us and stand with



Alex Foott, Fundraising Officer at Positive East

Since joining Positive East's Fundraising Team three years ago, Alex has focused on finding new ways to engage the local East London community to support those living with HIV and to become more involved in our work. This has taken many different forms, including inviting people to take part in our fundraising events, meeting with supporters and local business owners and making sure the public is kept up to date with our work via newsletters and social media.

Upper Left: Matthew and Renee parachute for Positive East
Lower Right: Cecilia and Pablo HIV testing at Ridley Road Market

As the Fundraising Officer at Positive East, I have really enjoyed developing Positive East's community events and am so pleased that our new fundraising activities have been successful in raising our profile and strengthening support and enthusiasm for our work.

In July this year, the charity's first ever skydiving event brought together 6 of our supporters who bravely took on the challenge of the jump and raised more than £5,000 for our work! Now, my goal is to continue growing the number of challenge events like this and find exciting ways to help people get involved and support us.

Our newest community fundraising event - KRUSH - returned this summer for its second year and brought together 11 East London businesses to rally support and promote Positive East's work. The event has been instrumental in helping us make our work more visible to the East London community, something that is becoming increasingly vital for us if we are to continue supporting people living with HIV.

In the years to come, KRUSH will bring together even more businesses, ensuring that our HIV support services remain in the East London mindset!

In the last couple of years, our flagship fundraising event - The World AIDS Day Red Run - has been such an inspiring example of the power of community. Positive East is very much a grassroots, community-led charity and seeing thousands of people coming to take part in an

event that we have organised and hosted is so encouraging.

There have been some truly amazing developments in the world of HIV. This of course is cause for great celebration. However, it also means that HIV support often looks like a need of the past, despite continuing HIV stigma and misunderstanding.

For the foreseeable future, we - along with the Sexual Health sector as a whole - are likely to receive less and less funding. Despite this, we need to make sure that we can continue our services.

It's now becoming even more important that we communicate the importance of our work and show exactly how we are supporting people through developing the skills, confidence and well-being to manage an HIV diagnosis and live full, happy lives.

One of the most impactful ways to support Positive East is through making a monthly donation to the charity. Regardless of the amount, the regularity of this support is what allows us to effectively plan and build strategies for our work. This stability is crucial to the structure of Positive East's work and ensures that we are able to provide long-term, ongoing support to our service users who in turn enrich our service provision by sharing their experiences with others.

I hope you can stand with us as we forge forward into a future where a rallying community and individual support will be more important than ever before.

www.positiveeast.org.uk/support-us

Happy!

I met a guy
Conversation flowed
Should I tell him about my status?
I fear communicating my situation

He might tell people, and I won't like it
I love people around me
They keep me happy

Some friends know my status
They support me and I know
I am not alone

I told him my status
He was asking loads of questions
He wants to know more about U=U and PrEP

Sounds like he has been doing some research!
It feels good knowing I can talk to him about it

He has been texting with questions about HIV

He seems ok with my status

I don't know everything about HIV but I am learning with him

We are going on another date

Martha came to us for help with her benefits. She received a new form from the DWP and felt very confused by it and did not know what to do.

She was living by herself now. Her husband Michael had died a few years before - as a result of an AIDS related condition.

Martha, in addition to living with HIV, was having trouble with her memory - she had HIV related cognitive impairment, mobility issues and other respiratory health matters.

When talking with our staff member she told us that she was feeling cold in her house and that she could not make the heating work. She had told her housing association who had said that there was nothing wrong with her heating.

In the course of the conversation she also told us that since her husband had passed away, she often felt alone and isolated and that she missed him very much.

We helped Martha with her benefits claim, liaising with medics at her hospital and the DWP. We ensured she got the benefits to which she was entitled.

We visited her house and realised that the issue with the heating was that she had been using the wrong card to put credits on the meter. The staff visiting went through her cards placing them in separate envelopes with a note as to what they were for. She found this very helpful.

We referred Martha to the local social services team to assess her for some homecare support. We linked her with one of our peer support workers who encouraged Martha to attend one of our support groups.

Martha told us she feeling more confident and hopeful.

INFORMATION & ADVICE

Our Advice services are key to providing a solid platform upon which people living with HIV can build their health and well-being.

The service we offer helps people address those critical basic concerns about being able to have enough money to buy food, pay rent and heat your home.

The team of staff and volunteers provides specialist, externally quality marked, information, advice, advocacy and a case work service with a focus on ill-health and disability benefits, housing and low-level debt.

The team operates holistically and will often pick up wider issues that are impacting on a person's life proactively seeking to avoid the escalation of need.

The experience of Martha (not her real name) is a good example of this service in action.

Every year Positive East's Information and Advice Team supports hundreds of individuals like Martha and is London's only AQS certified Advice Service for people living with HIV.

To find out more about our Advice Service please visit our website.

www.positiveeast.org.uk

Hugh Wyld is the Director of HIV Voices, a creative writing and performance organisation tackling HIV stigma through storytelling. HIV Voices is partnered with Positive East.

THE SCIENCE OF

STORYTELLING

'It's story that makes us human' - Will Storr

Back in May, Positive East held their annual Faith Symposium, bringing faith leaders and service users together under one roof to talk about faith, relationships and HIV. The day was a busy mix of discussion, performances and conversation and threaded

throughout were a series of simple but powerful pieces of spoken word, written and performed by a group of female service users. These spoken word pieces were created in workshops held recently at the charity; a collaboration between HIV Voices and Positive East that aimed to tackle stigma through the art of storytelling.

The event ended with the group performing a verse each from a poem - written by one of the women - a beautiful piece of autobiographical writing about finding both resilience and love within yourself. We only had about 30 minutes before to divvy up who was going to speak each part, and came up with a vague way of staging the poem.

But when it came to performing the piece and as the women started joining each other on the stage one by one, verse by verse the atmosphere in the room changed to one of total focus and awe. It felt electric. As I sat in the audience watching the women take ownership over the stage and hold the audience with their words I thought about how essential personal storytelling is when it comes to HIV. Why might this be the case?



Above: Tresca Wilson, HIV Voices Talking Together

Well first of all, the act of telling a story is universal and hard wired into us since birth - as writer Jonathan Grottschall says: 'We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night.' From family to friends, religion to community, the information which creates human connection is so often shared through telling stories. Everyone can connect to a story, because we've been doing it for years. So when it comes to talking about HIV and removing barriers that divide (positive/negative, us/them), story-telling becomes - in my experience with HIV Voices - one of the most effective ways to help people understand. That in turn becomes a productive way to start breaking down stigma.

Secondly, storytelling allows the HIV positive writer and speaker to centre themselves in their own narrative, shaped by them and on their own terms, something that remains so necessary when confronting common misconceptions about HIV. Stigma arises out of fear of the unknown and storytelling allows that gap to be filled, on a simple, intimate and human level. One of our other pieces is all about dating and in it the writer explains that she brushes her teeth, puts on her eyeliner, and gets butterflies about this boy. Then just as easily and casually she takes a pill and moves on. And instantly a listener or reader thinks about brushing their teeth and getting butterflies too.

There is something potentially therapeutic about being able to look back at certain experiences through a particular frame. Storytelling can provide added meaning and understanding to past experiences (say a point of diagnosis or moment of disclosure) and engender new feelings of self-worth and importance within the writer, allowing us a chance to rework the story we might have told ourselves at the time. Because things can change and so do our emotional biographies. Which is why we keep talking, and why we must keep telling stories.

The performance at the Faith Symposium ended with the line 'it will end happily ever after', spoken in unison by the women, a knowing nod to a fairytale ending. In the poem's case however, it is not the princess who falls in love with the prince but rather the positive speaker falling in love with herself. Personal storytelling allows us to challenge prevailing, harmful narratives around HIV - those 'classic tales' - and re-write our own endings.



Talking Together is a combined spoken word, performance and film project run by HIV Voices and Positive East and funded by Public Health England. The focus of Talking Together is on mixed status relationships amongst the black African community with an aim to tackle stigma through a series of workshops and the development of five spoken word films directed by Anna de Guia-Eriksson.

PositiveEast

Positive East is a community run organisation and we are grassroots by definition. Meaning a large proportion of our services are delivered by the community and we are increasingly reliant on the community's financial support.

Staff

Aiden Curtain
Alastair Thomson
Alex Foott
Alissa Ferry
André Smith
Antonio Giacalone
Badru Male
Beatrice Nabulya
Chantal Busbridge
Greg Leonard
Griselda Payne
Ian Montgomery
Irene Grazulienė
Joanne McCarthy
Liz Lesley
Mark Santos
Massimo Nardi
Ololade Benson
Peter Ekakoro
Phillip Dzwonkiewicz
Phillip Wragg
Renee West
Resty Mulemwa
Ricky Krokos
Robert Fagliarone
Simon Farris
Steve Worrall
Stewart Turnbull
Tina Brown
Tracy Shearon

Patron

Lord Ray Collins of
Highbury

Board of Trustees

Graham Stoner
Marigold Chirisa
Mike Burnham
Nena Foster
Pete McDonnell
Ravi Ravindran
Rebecca Wilkins
Sarah Malcolm-Shearer
Selin Yurdakul
Simon Killick
Tony Parker

Over the past few years we have been successful at reducing our reliance on statutory sources of income.

Last year, nearly **50%** of our total income (£1.3m) was raised via trusts and foundations, regular individual donations, corporate support and our large public events such as our annual World AIDS Day RED RUN and KRUSH.

We cannot thank enough those organisation, funders and local businesses who stand with Positive East and have pledged their support. THANK YOU!

Corporation of London	Big Lottery Fund
London Borough Barking and Dagenham	City Bridge Trust
London Borough Hackney	Comic Relief
London Borough Havering	East End Community Foundation
London Borough Newham	Henry Smith Charity
London Borough Redbridge	J R Tijou Charitable Trust
London Borough Tower Hamlets	Kestrelman Trust
London Borough Waltham Forest	London Catalyst
London Councils	MAC AIDS Foundation
Public Health England	Make A Difference Trust
Royal Bank of Canada	Mark Ashton Trust
State Street	Pilgrim Trust
UBS	Porta Pia 2012 Foundation
HSBC	Wandsworth Oasis
Starbucks	Dalston Superstore
Interbank	Stunt Dolly
Gilead	Meat Magazine
ViiV Healthcare	Ricardo Matos Cabo
Emerald Life	Duke of Wellington
The Eagle and Mark Oakley	Tin Cafe
The Glory	Brunswick East
Weino BIB	Happy Endings
Club Mexicana	The White Swan
HIV Voices	Servant Jazz Quarters
The FSCS	Rina Sawayama
The FCA	Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
Financial Ombudsman Services	Aon
Mark Bloomfield	Adecco
Diversity Choir	Horse Meat Disco
GMDC Foundation	Queen Mary University Student Union
Stelle Cadente	Bloomberg

And a very special thanks to our Red Runners and regular monthly givers and to all of our volunteers who make our work possible.

For more information about Positive East, our services or how you can get involved in, and support our work please get in touch!

www.positiveeast.org.uk
talktome@positiveeast.org.uk
020 7791 9355

Positive East is a registered charity: 1001582
159 Mile End Road, London E1 4AQ

WORLD AIDS DAY

RED

RUN

LDN

VICTORIA PARK

WWW.REDRUN.ORG.UK