



Impact Report

2024

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Positive East have saved me multiple times when facing crisis. They are always so helpful and informative and the whole team are supportive and very approachable.

Introduction

As we move closer to the UK's 2030 goal of ending new transmissions of HIV, we will continue to focus on and expand our HIV Prevention, Testing, and Outreach programme. Over the next year, we will reach more people with our mobile testing van, bringing HIV testing into the community and reaching those who might not otherwise get tested. We will also expand our Women 4 Women programme to train more Community Champions and ensure that HIV prevention messaging reaches those at risk. Additionally, we will culminate our faith-based work through both singular and interfaith workshops ensuring that no community is left behind. We are formalising our approach to HIV testing and prevention among migrant communities, including providing testing in hotels, hostels, and spaces frequented by migrant communities.

We will continue to support People Living with HIV and further refine our services to best respond to their changing needs. Our redesigned Health and Wellbeing programme will move into its second year of delivery, building on the success and feedback of year one, to support more People Living with HIV. In this second year, we will conduct a review of how our services specifically support women and explore ways to enhance our offer.

Our Advice Service will remain on the frontlines, supporting People Living with HIV on issues of housing, benefits, and immigration. We will progress to the next phase of our temporary accommodation work, focusing on sharing the stories and lived experiences of People Living with HIV in temporary accommodation to raise

Positive East provided me with a home when nowhere made me feel at home. I gained back my confidence to go out in the world, it showed me how to live a life.

awareness of their unique challenges and advocate for more supportive systems.

The biggest development at Positive East will be the launch of our new Research and Insight department in 2025. This department will focus on social research into the experiences of living with HIV and the barriers to HIV prevention. Through our research, we aim to reduce HIV stigma, better support People Living with HIV, and address health inequalities faced by marginalised groups.

At the end of the day, our plans are simple: improve the quality of life of individuals and communities affected by HIV.



Positive East is my home not just an organisation.

About us

Positive East is East London's dedicated HIV charity with over 30 years of experience, operating across the eight boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, City of London, Newham, Redbridge, Havering, and Barking & Dagenham.

East London has some of the highest HIV prevalence in England. Across the eight boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, City of London, Newham, Redbridge, Havering, and Barking & Dagenham, the average HIV prevalence is 4.6 diagnoses per 1,000 residents compared to 2.4 diagnoses per 1,000 residents across England. Based on current HIV prevalence and population data, there are an estimate 6,024 People Living with HIV across East London (UK Health Security Agency, 2023).

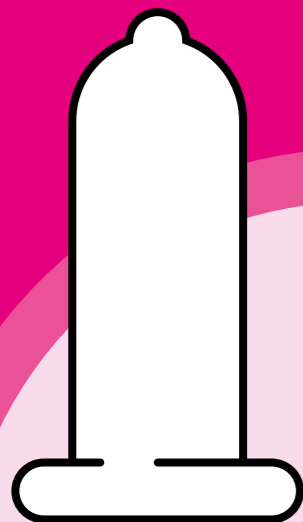
Positive East is East London's dedicated HIV charity. With over 30 years of experience, our mission is to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities affected by HIV.

Our vision is:

- + People Living with HIV can live full and healthy lives free from stigma and discrimination.
- + There are no new HIV transmissions.
- + No group or community is left behind as we strive to end inequality and inequity in health.
- + Good sexual health and wellbeing is realised for all.
- + We are working towards our vision by providing holistic support services for People Living with HIV and a comprehensive HIV prevention, testing, and outreach programme.

Positive East is an oasis for me... I feel like I found my tribe and for me it's literally an answer to my prayers.

Year in numbers

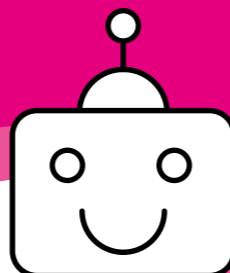


5,398
condoms distributed

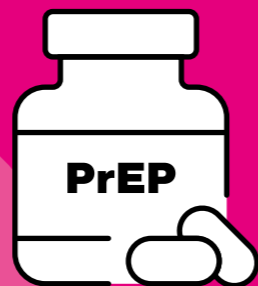
841
People Living with HIV supported



1,056
conversations with PAT sexual health chatbot



85
PrEP referrals made



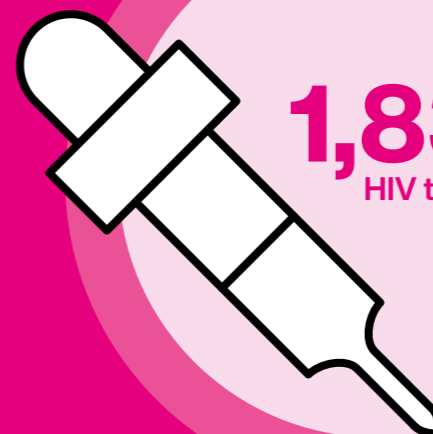
“Positive East really helped me in overcoming mental health issues due to HIV. My confidence and life improved, thanks to Positive East.”

“Great service! The tester provided me with enough knowledge and now I’m much more aware now.”



2,000
World AIDS Day RED RUN participants

1,839
HIV tests given



£754,518
raised in benefits and charitable support for People Living with HIV

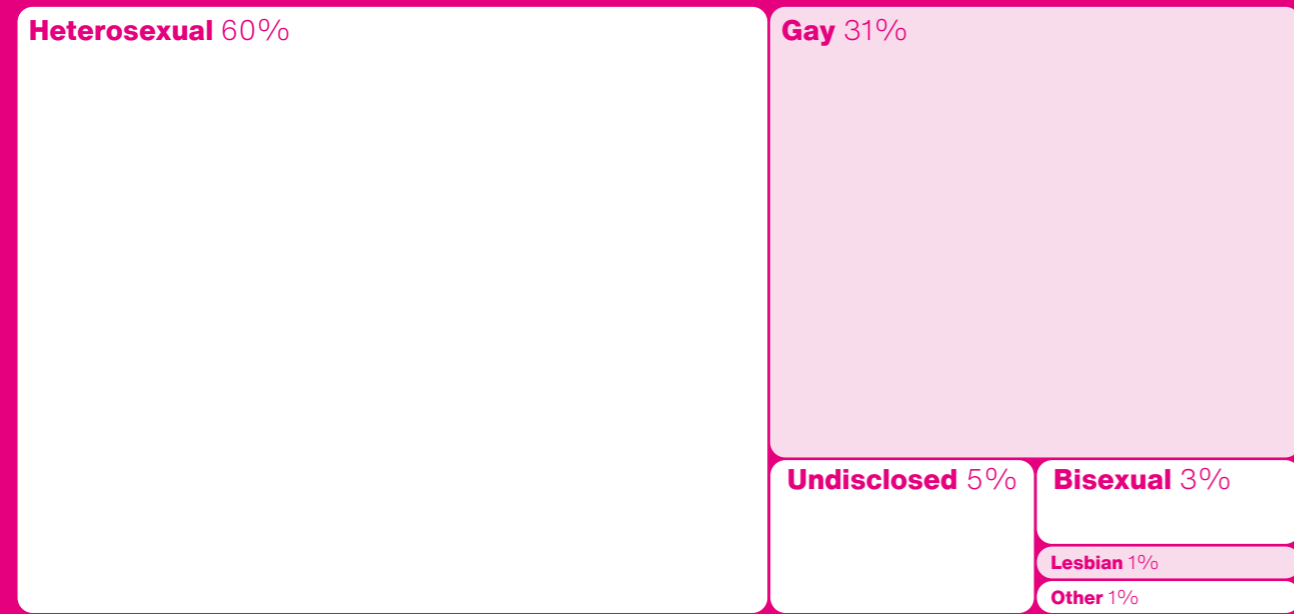


In 2024 Positive East beneficiaries rated our services 4.5 out of 5 stars

97% of testing beneficiaries would recommend testing with Positive East

92% of People Living with HIV improved their wellbeing

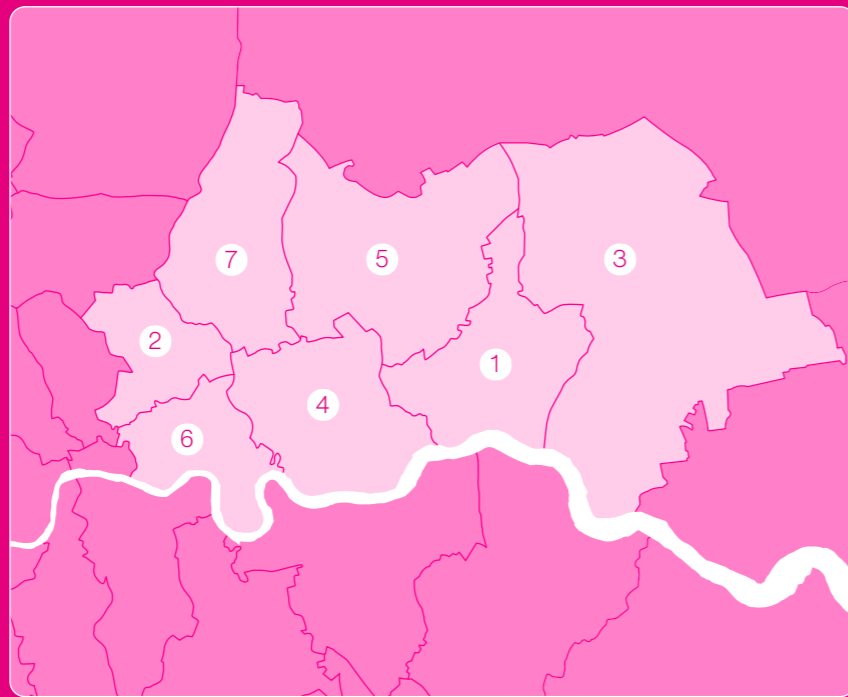
Sexuality of beneficiaries



Where our beneficiaries live

- 1 Barking & Dagenham 9%
- 2 Hackney 15%
- 3 Havering 4%
- 4 Newham 20%
- 5 Redbridge 10%
- 6 Tower Hamlets 14%
- 7 Waltham Forest 8%

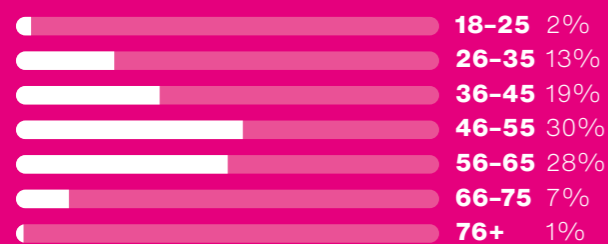
Other London boroughs 15%
Outside London 5%



Preferred spoken languages



Beneficiary age ranges



Gender of beneficiaries



Support services for People Living with HIV

People living with HIV often face shame, stigma, and isolation. They are more likely to suffer from poor mental health, higher levels of unemployment, and poverty than the general population.

To help meet the most pressing needs of People living with HIV, we co-produce holistic HIV support services with the people we support.

Last year, 841 People Living with HIV accessed on our support service. 82% of beneficiaries received support from more than one service – demonstrating the increasingly complex cases and needs of People Living with HIV.

Demographics

Since the earliest days of the HIV pandemic, the most marginalised communities have been at the highest risk and while many things have changed since the start of the epidemic, this fact remains the same. Today, HIV disproportionately impacts Black and Brown people, women, and any group outside of the dominant power structure.

of people receiving HIV support in England, with the majority of our beneficiaries coming from one of the two groups most impacted by HIV – Black African and Caribbean individuals, or gay men. Beyond demographics, we are proud of the diverse and rich lived experiences and perspectives that our beneficiaries bring to Positive East and share with others. Last year, our beneficiaries come from 110 countries, spoke at least 49 languages, and practised over 9 religions.

The demographic breakdown of our beneficiaries mirrors the broader demographics



Positive East is the place I feel most confident talking about my needs around mental health, housing and benefits advice.

Health and wellbeing

Our Health and wellbeing support People Living with HIV to improve their mental health, make new friends, build their confidence and ultimately improve their quality of life.

This programme includes a range of services including peer support groups, befriending, counselling and psychology, workshops, social events, peer mentoring, gym and complimentary therapies and one-to-one support.

483 People Living with HIV benefited from one or more aspect of the health and wellbeing services.

At Positive East you meet other people and share ideas about life.

What we delivered:

- + 1,768 hours of one-to-one counselling and clinical psychology
- + 1,990 hours of one-to-one peer support case work
- + 35 peer support group sessions ran
- + 12 peer mentor relationships
- + 26 workshops, panels, events and creative sessions delivered

What impact it had:

- + 95% improved their self-esteem
- + 94% are more confident in using other services
- + 90% have stronger support networks
- + 93% improved their mental health
- + Counselling and clinical psychology beneficiaries decreased their symptoms of anxiety by an average of 5 points moving from moderate levels of anxiety to mild anxiety (measured by GAD-7)
- + 97% of counselling and clinical psychology beneficiaries decreased their symptoms of depression (measured by PHQ-9)

Spotlight on: Positive over 50

In 2024 we launched a new programme designed specifically to support People Living with HIV over the age of 50. This programme aims to reduce isolation and improve quality of life. The programme includes monthly lunch clubs, trips out to cultural venues, befriending, and wellbeing panels.

Fifty-four People Living with HIV over the age of 50 benefited from the programme and they reported:

- + 97% felt more independent.
- + 97% reported improved wellbeing.
- + 91% developed stronger support networks.

Doris' story

Building friendships and resilience over 60



Doris is a woman in her 60s living with HIV. Last year, she suffered some ill health which impaired her mobility and vision. To help navigate this, Doris moved to London to live with a friend.

At first, things were great but then Doris's friend saw her HIV medication and discovered that she was living with HIV. Doris's friend began to treat her differently. "I like to help, and I would try to do the washing up, but she didn't like me to do the dishes. I wanted to tell her that she couldn't get HIV from the dishes".

Doris's friend eventually told her to leave. Doris moved out but found that she didn't know many people in London, and she became isolated and lonely. Doris learned about Positive East through someone she met and got in touch.

After meeting with a Positive East Peer Support Co-Ordinator, Doris was introduced to our Over 50's peer support group. Doris began attending

the group which meets monthly over lunch in our Café. Slowly she became more involved in the group and she started taking part in group outings to sites like Kew Gardens. Through this Doris began to blossom and make friends.

"They brought me back into the community and got me talking to other people. I felt alone but I came here, and I met new people".

Doris has built strong friendships through the group and now feels more confident to go out by herself, "If I didn't come here, I'd be sitting in the house and having pain in my legs. But the being together really helped".

"Positive East is my home not just an organisation".

Doris now feels like she is living a normal and happy life because of support from Positive East.

Advice service

We run the only AQS4 accredited advice service by and for People Living with HIV in London.

The service is made up of one-to-one advice appointments and casework, and an advice line that can be accessed for one-off support. We cover issues including benefits applications, housing support, and employment.

537 People Living with HIV benefited from our advice services over the year.

What we delivered:

- + 194 calls to the advice line
- + 797 advice cases
- + 2,004 hours of casework provided

What impact it had:

- + 92% of beneficiaries feel less stressed and anxious
- + 91% of beneficiaries agree that they are more hopeful for the future
- + 81% of beneficiaries improved their financial situation
- + £754,517 in benefits and charitable support raised for People Living with HIV



Spotlight on: Temporary Accommodation for People Living with HIV

Since 2021 we have worked with Trust for London on their temporary accommodation initiative which aims to improve temporary accommodation across London for all Londoners. We initially undertook research to learn the impact of living in temporary accommodation on People Living with HIV.

The research found that 75% of People Living with HIV living in temporary accommodation said that temporary accommodation worsened their mental health, 50% said their

relationships and social lives suffered, and 30% said that temporary accommodation made their physical health worse.

This ongoing work is now advocating for changes to the temporary accommodation system and supporting PLWHIV in temporary accommodation. Last year, 172 advice cases were focused on housing with the vast majority of cases being around homelessness and seeking temporary accommodation.

James' story

From sleeping rough to a warm bed

James is a gay man living with HIV. James was living in temporary accommodation in London, but he faced threats and harassment in his temporary accommodation.

James was terrified and fled his accommodation – without his HIV medication. After James fled his accommodation, he presented the Council with evidence of the harassment he was facing, and they promised to find him different housing.

After 10 days of sleeping rough, James came to Positive East for help. Upon hearing his situation, our advice worker immediately contacted the Council to discuss the case.

Later that afternoon, a member of the council's housing team emailed to inform us that temporary accommodation had been approved and was awaiting final approval from a team leader. Despite our repeated calls, we didn't receive any further communication from the housing team for several hours. As the workday came to an end, we welcomed James to stay



for a peer support group and for a hot meal with other gay men living with HIV at the Positive East building.

Our advice workers continued to call the council and eventually spoke to the out-of-hours housing team, who informed us that they had no record of James, no housing arrangement had been made, and therefore, James wouldn't receive accommodation that night. We arranged for James to stay in a hostel for the night.

The next day, the Council offered James temporary accommodation. He accepted the offer, and before heading to the accommodation, our advice worker contacted his HIV Consultant to secure James an emergency refill of his HIV medication and helped him to retrieve it to ensure he could resume HIV treatment.

James has settled into his new temporary accommodation, and he told us that he feels safer and he's experiencing an improvement in his overall wellbeing.

“

I was rough sleeping and felt hopeless. When I came to Positive East I met incredible people who were always so supportive and kind to me. I have never felt so accepted and respected before. Definitely one of the best organisations.

HIV testing, prevention and outreach

We are striving to reach the UK 2030 goals of ending new transmissions of HIV.

We do this through providing community centred HIV/STI testing, raising awareness of HIV prevention methods, distributing condoms, and running specialist HIV prevention programmes focused on communities most at risk of acquiring HIV. We provide testing and outreach in 71 different venues across the eight East London boroughs, including twice a week from our building in Stepney Green.

In the past year we:

- + Provided 1,839 HIV tests
- + Provided 1,613 STI tests
- + Provided 321 HIV tests using our mobile testing van
- + Distributed 5,398 condoms
- + Delivered 552 HIV and STI testing sessions across 71 venues in East London
- + Delivered 98 additional outreach sessions providing information on HIV prevention
- + Delivered 3 specialist prevention programmes
- + Answered 1,056 enquires with Pat, the UK's only sexual health chatbot
- + Made 85 PrEP referrals
- + 26% of HIV tests were given to first time testers
- + 97% said that they would recommend the service to a friend

Smooth process. The person who did the test was lovely and giving me advice and instructions on the different parts of the test. Offered me condoms too. Very nice experience.



Who are we testing?

Sexuality of beneficiaries

Heterosexual 66%

Gay/bisexual men/MSM 25%

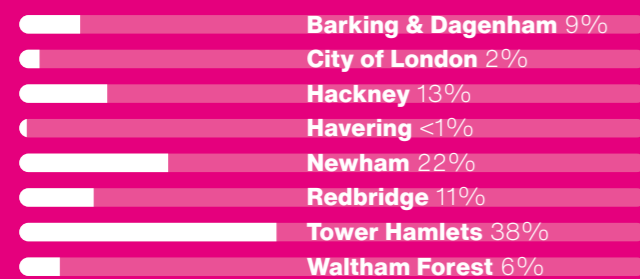
Bisexual women 5%

Queer 2%

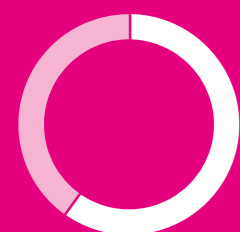
Lesbian 1%

Undisclosed 1%

Where tests were carried out



Place of birth



Born in the UK 60%

Born outside the UK 40%

Ethnicity

White British 17%

White Eastern European 7%

White other 13%

Black African & Black Caribbean 24%

Black British 6%

South Asian 14%

Asian other 10%

Mixed 5%

Latin American 3%

Other 1%

Gender

Cis and trans men 66%

Cis and trans women 32%

Other 3%

Spotlight on: Women 4 Women

Our Women 4 Women project works to ensure that Black African and Caribbean women aren't left behind in HIV response. Women from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds are at particularly high risk of acquiring HIV. Despite this, PrEP uptake among this group remains low compared to other groups.

This project trains Black African and Caribbean women to be Community Champions, increasing their knowledge around HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health and empowering them to bring knowledge and understanding into their communities. Community Champions deliver sexual health workshops in community spaces and support other women to take charge of their sexual health.

In 2024, 100% of Community Champions reported improved knowledge around sexual health and HIV prevention which is higher than we initially expected.

“ Being in contact with other Champions with a variety of cultural backgrounds has been enriching because we unify thoughts and ways to achieve the same goal and to spread it more widely. ”





My experiences with Positive East was life changing for better, sometimes you may feel down and Positive East gives you a place to go and share your worry with someone. You are not alone.

Conclusion

Over the year we have seen many growing trends in HIV support and prevention.

We have seen that People Living with HIV are facing increasingly complex situations which have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing. The changes to the benefits system and the ongoing cost of living crisis have pushed People Living with HIV further into poverty and have limited the places that they can turn to for help. This turn has negative impacts on people's wellbeing and mental health, we have seen People Living with HIV are increasingly experiencing poor mental health and internalised stigma. We have also seen the shifting needs of people who are growing older with HIV. Aging with HIV, due to both HIV related stigma and the nature of the illness, exacerbates other challenges associated with aging, including co-morbidities, loneliness, and isolation.

We have been able to respond to these growing needs through our work supporting People Living with HIV in temporary accommodation and new over 50's programme. Positive East remains a welcoming place for People Living with HIV and we are proud that our beneficiaries feel the same way.

In our HIV prevention, testing, and outreach work, we have been able to provide specialist prevention programmes targeting the changing

demographics of HIV risks. We have dedicated ample time, planning, and resources to supporting the communities most vulnerable to acquiring HIV while still supporting those who have always been at risk. We have supported Black African and Caribbean women to access PrEP and empower them to take charge of their sexual health through our Women 4 Women programme. Our support for Black African and Caribbean and other racially marginalised communities goes beyond our Women 4 Women project and is a constant thread through our prevention work. Our Project Community programme specifically works within City and Hackney to increase the sexual and reproductive knowledge among those communities. Additionally, our testing van reaches diverse communities further by providing HIV testing in settings where they frequent. We supported communities of faith by upskilling religious leaders and providing resources that share key messages about HIV preventions in a way that honours and respects their beliefs.

Ultimately, over the past year we have reached our goals and supported those who need us. We are incredibly proud of the work our team has done to support People Living with HIV and prevent new HIV transmissions.

Thank you



Supporters

National Lottery Community Fund
MAC VIVA GLAM
Trust for London
The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington
The Henry Smith Charity
Gilead
Tower Hamlets Mayor's Community Grant
Wandsworth Oasis
Charkes S French Charitable Trust
Francis Winham Foundation
The David Family Foundation
Hospital Saturday Fund

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Lord Collins of Highbury
Rina Sawayama
Dominic Skinner
Tom Rasmussen
Winnie Ssanyu Sseruma

“

Positive East is like a shining beacon that seeks you out when you're in a dark place, they restore our dignity our self-worth and gives each individual a chance to look towards the future with a bit more confidence.



UK Registered Charity #1001582

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