



Minutes of the APPG's meeting on:

London's HIV Challenge

20th May 2019, 1 - 2pm

Macmillan Room, Portcullis House

Chaired by Bob Neill MP, APPG for London Co-Chair. Fellow APPG for London Co-Chair Steve Reed MP also attended.

Panel speakers:

Chris Buckley, Positively UK (an HIV advocacy group)

Dr Renee West, GMI Partnership (a provider of HIV prevention services)

Paul Steinberg, lead commissioner of the London HIV Prevention Programme

Chris Buckley

- Chris shared his own story as someone who had contracted HIV.
- Chris went to the GP for years – he finally went to hospital as an emergency case, and afterwards he was diagnosed with HIV. Thankfully he now has a healthy immune system and is able to live a normal, healthy life (on two pills a day)
- Stigma is the biggest blocker to reducing transmission – 1980s campaign terrified people and we still need to work on messages such as undetectable means untransmittable (U=U).
- In 2017, 43% of all diagnoses were classed as late. People fear the discrimination and isolation that comes from a positive test for HIV.
- Peer support helps normalise the condition – 90% of people should be getting peer support and this is clearly not happening in London.
- Cuts to funding prevent us being able to offer peer support needed and funding is vital to reduce stigma.

Dr Renee West

- GMI is a ten-year partnership of three London based charities – working with LGBT and black minority ethnic communities.
- Intersectionality issues mean that support needs to be targeted in different ways for different groups.
- Services provided include assessment, pre-test discussions, access to contraception, GUM clinic info – and all of these taken together make up a preventative strategy.
- The current challenges include funding cuts and fragmented commissioning leading to reduction of GUM clinics and a rise in HIV cases. Long-term uncertainty for service delivery and the lack of a uniform approach is impacting services.
- Prevention is about testing, messaging about U = U etc. It is not simply about offering condoms.

Paul Steinberg

- The London HIV Prevention Programme, funded collectively by the London boroughs, consists of outreach projects but also a major multimedia campaign. The programme's strategy is to talk to all Londoners about HIV prevention, but also to reach those very specific groups who need engagement.
- Paul, like the other speakers, reiterated that prevention is not just about testing. The LHPP and its Do It London awareness campaigns promotes a 'combination prevention' approach.
- Combatting stigma very important indeed. The general public need to understand what HIV is and how it affects those diagnosed.
- There are thought to be 2,000 undiagnosed people in London, and in some outer London boroughs late diagnosis rates are at 60% of the total number of diagnoses.
- Public health funding in London has experienced 'deep' cuts, which puts pressure on services, yet London is pledging to eradicate all diagnoses by 2030.
- New diagnoses rates in London are currently falling. London is seen as a global leader in HIV prevention. The government has now made a national commitment to ending new HIV diagnoses by 2030.
- Paul also highlighted the PrEP trial and the associated controversy. London provided the lion share of the trial places (providing free PrEP – an HIV prevention medicine – to people at high risk of exposure). But places are limited due to resource constraints and a long-term funding solution for PrEP must be found.

Questions and discussion

Discussion opened with comments about the need to resist any suggestion that HIV is a 'job done' – it still represents a major public health challenge and London needs the resources to tackle it.

The forthcoming Spending Review will be decisive. London's work on HIV prevention is a great example of local government's contribution to fulfilling the objectives of the NHS Long Term Plan – understanding local need, using resources wisely, and reducing avoidable health costs.

Successful HIV prevention means working across boundaries: primary care, homelessness, drug use issues. This can't be seen in isolation as a sexual health concern.

The APPG co-chairs suggested that London's record of success would be included in any APPG submission to the Treasury. This could point out that there has been a dividend from reduced HIV diagnoses in the last two years – but savings from this are not being passed on to preventative work, where resources are under pressure.