

CABINET MEETING: 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

**HIV ACTION PLAN FOR WALES; ELIMINATING HIV –
IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE AND TACKLING STIGMA
ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIRUS – A CONSULTATION
RESPONSE**

**TACKLING POVERTY, EQUALITY & PUBLIC HEALTH
(COUNCILLOR JULIE SANGHANI/COUNCILLOR PETER
BRADBURY)**

AGENDA ITEM: 11

Reason for this Report

1. To seek approval for consultation response to Welsh Government's Draft HIV Action Plan for Wales. The Action Plan is at Appendix 1 and the draft consultation response is at Appendix 2.

Background

2. When HIV first began infecting people in the 1970s, scientists were unaware of its existence. Now, more than 35 million people across the globe live with HIV/AIDS. Substantial progress has been made in the fight against this formerly unknown and heavily stigmatized virus. Infection rates have fallen or stabilized in many countries across the world, but there is still further progress to be made.
3. There is no cure for HIV infection. However, with increasing access to effective HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care, HIV infection has become a manageable chronic health condition, enabling people living with HIV to lead long and healthy lives.
4. HIV continues to be a medical condition that carries a great deal of stigma. Often, this is due to lack of knowledge or people making moral judgements regarding how someone has contracted HIV. People living with HIV can experience abuse, be excluded from activities that they enjoy, face difficulties in their personal and work life. They can also become socially isolated.

5. Increasing awareness and accessibility of testing is crucial in order to diagnose HIV at an early stage, provide people with treatment and support quickly, as well as preventing ongoing transmission.

Global Ambition

6. In 2000, at the United Nations General Assembly's Millennium Summit world leaders set specific goals to stop and reverse the spread of HIV. A Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was issued, which set out a series of targets and global actions.
7. Ending AIDS by 2030 is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were unanimously adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015.

Wales Context

8. It is estimated that between 11% and 18% of people living with HIV in Wales are currently unaware that they have the infection, contributing to ongoing transmission to others in the population and poorer health outcomes for themselves.
9. The Welsh Government working with other partners has made progress in improving access to testing and treatment e.g. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is a HIV prevention strategy in which HIV-negative people use HIV antiretrovirals to reduce their risk of becoming infected with HIV. Since the summer of 2018 the NHS services in Wales have been able to prescribe PrEP.
10. Wales has seen a significant reduction in new diagnoses of HIV with a decrease of 75% between 2012 and 2021 but there is more to be done if the goal of eliminating HIV related discrimination and zero new transmissions by 2030 is to be achieved.
11. Welsh Government's Programme for Government set out a commitment to develop a HIV Action for Wales and an ambition of tackling stigma experienced by those living with HIV.

Cardiff Context

12. The Fast Track Cities Initiative is a global partnership that works towards zero new infections, eliminating HIV related stigma and improving the quality of life of people living with HIV. In October 2020 the Fast Track Cardiff and the Vale Leadership Group was established consisting of senior stakeholders from Cardiff and the Vale Local Authorities, the Cardiff & the Vale University Health Board, Public Health Wales, Cardiff University, Pride Cymru, Terence Higgins Trust and other key stakeholders was created to oversee the work of Fast Track Cardiff and the Vale. Successful campaigns and projects have included testing week

and Texting for Testing which supported GPs to send HIV testing messages via text as well as links to access home testing.

13. A report from the Fast Track Cardiff and the Vale Steering Group in 2019 indicated that Cardiff has the highest HIV prevalence in Wales and at around 1000 cases is comparable to similar size UK cities that have active HIV prevention programmes.
14. The proportion of those diagnosed with HIV “late” is higher in Cardiff than the UK average, 62% in Cardiff compared to 42% in the UK as a whole. This means that more people will likely to be dependent on hospital care and more are likely to pass on their HIV to other partners, as they are not aware of their status and are receiving appropriate treatment.

HIV Action Plan

15. In 2021 a HIV Action Plan Working Group led by Dr Marion Lyons, a senior Medical Officer within Welsh Government, was established. Membership of the group included a wide range of stakeholders and included Lisa Power, a member of Fast Track Cities Cardiff and the Vale Leadership Group. The group has co-created a draft HIV Action plan.
16. Consultation on the draft HIV Action Plan for Wales; Eliminating HIV – improving quality of life and tackling stigma associated with the virus – an action plan for 2023-26 was launched by the First Minister on the 14th June.

Summary of the action plan

Priority Areas

17. The plan sets out five priority areas:
 - Prevention
 - Testing
 - Clinical Care
 - Living well with HIV
 - Tackling HIV-related stigma

Overarching actions:

18. The plan outlines five overarching actions:
 - Establishing Wales as a Fast Track Nation
 - Involvement of voluntary and community groups
 - Funding and development of an all-Wales sexual health case management system

- Health boards and trusts to report on the implementation of the actions in the plan
- Establishment of an Action Plan Oversight Group

Key Detailed Actions

19. The Action Plan comprises of 26 actions, each linked to one of the five priority areas. The 16 actions below have potential for Local Authority involvement. Fuller details can be seen in Cardiff's consultation response to the action plan (*Appendix 2*)

- Building on the success of the Fast Track Cities initiative in Cardiff and the Vale, a new national umbrella body, Fast Track Cymru (FTC) will be established and funded by Welsh Government.
- In the implementation of the plan, Welsh Government, health boards, local authorities and other partners will work closely with the HIV voluntary and community sector.
- An HIV Action Plan Oversight Group will be established to monitor progress against the ambitions and to advise Ministers on progress and any further actions required.
- Continue to deliver, develop and evaluate the "Ask me about PrEP" programme in Wales.
- Public Health Wales, working with Fast Track Cymru collaborative networks and the voluntary and community sectors, will continue to support the wider use of, and diverse access to PrEP.
- Primary care and specialist sexual health services should develop and implement a shared care model to improve access and delivery of PrEP. Health boards should explore how community organisations can support PrEP.
- PHW will ensure that the online testing will continue to be made more accessible. The online testing will be promoted more widely by PHW to tackle inequalities and the user journey improved.
- A plan will be developed with Fast Track Cymru, health boards and voluntary & community partners to ensure no individual or community will be left behind when it comes to testing.
- The all-Wales HIV testing week will be funded appropriately by Welsh Government for the duration of this action plan. Health boards, local authorities and partners will be expected to support this initiative.

- A national peer support programme for Wales will be commissioned by Welsh Government in the autumn of 2022.
- Fast Track Cymru and its local networks working with voluntary and community groups should support health boards and local authorities to engage meaningfully with all diverse communities.
- Social Care Wales will adapt this training programme for use in the social care sector and develop a plan for its delivery to all social care workers.
- The message that people living with HIV on effective treatment can't pass it on to a partner should be promoted widely and all HIV training modules should be consistent with this message.
- Resources in the school curriculum should effectively address HIV, PrEP and stigma and be consistent with the latest evidence on HIV.
- FTC should work with collaborating organisations and the Advocacy network to ensure that awareness of stigma and the promotion of positive messages is a common and ongoing thread in their work.
- PHW, working with partner organisations and people living with HIV, will introduce and promote an annual Wellbeing Survey of People Living with HIV to monitor whether change has been affected and is effective.

Issues

Summary of Cardiff Council's response

20. The plan represents a comprehensive and ambitious approach to achieving the goals of eliminating HIV, improving quality of life and tackling stigma associated with the virus. A full response to the Draft HIV Action Plan has been drafted and can be found in Appendix 2. There are several areas of the action plan that have been welcomed within the response, these are set out below:

- Five overarching priority areas that set out a clear vision
- Continuation of the "Ask me about PrEP" programme in Wales.
- Option for people to access 'click and collect' services for testing
- Reaching underserved populations to ensure that no individual or community is left behind when it comes to testing.
- The extension of 'Texting for testing' throughout Wales
- Funding for the all-Wales HIV testing week

- The commissioning by Welsh Government of a national peer support programme for Wales in autumn 2022
- Support for health boards and local authorities to engage meaningfully with all diverse communities
- HIV awareness training programme for social care staff
- Resources in the school curriculum should effectively address HIV, PrEP and stigma, and be consistent with the latest evidence on HIV
- Work to increase awareness of stigma and promote positive messages
- Introduction of an annual Wellbeing Survey of People Living with HIV to monitor whether change has been affected

Areas for Consideration

21. It is considered that there is scope for further involvement from local authorities in the implementation of various sections within the action plan and this view has been reflected in the consultation response (*Appendix 2*). A summary of the areas for consideration that have been included in the consultation response can be seen below:-

- Disseminating information to increase awareness within the wider community including testing and prevention programmes as well as HIV related information.
- Investigating the potential for 'click and collect' services (home tests and PrEP) to be facilitated within community venues and within targeted services e.g. homeless services.
- Involvement in the ambition for no individual or community to be left behind when it comes to testing, reaching underserved populations. Local Authorities already deliver a wide range of services to communities and could support this action.
- Wales does not currently have commissioned HIV support services. This includes a lack of dedicated HIV peer support provision. Peer support can be hugely beneficial in supporting people living with HIV to manage their condition including the impact that HIV diagnosis can have on their mental health. Welsh Government has committed to commissioning services following consideration of Cardiff Universities research around this. There is scope for possible involvement for Local Authorities in a stepped approach to facilitating support groups within the community.
- Although there is an appetite expressed within the draft plan to increase public awareness, there is no specific action around this. In order to be effective, national marketing campaigns need to be extensive and comprise a variety of platforms including digital and non-digital. This will increase the reach of the messaging. It would be beneficial for financial planning to include this aspect.

- In order to contribute to the development of compassionate communities, it may be beneficial to consider the extension of HIV awareness training detailed within the plan to additional local authority staff (as well as health and social care)
- The revised *The Curriculum for Wales – Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code* was published in January 2022. The code sets out mandatory learning for children in a phased approach beginning at the age of 3. Phase 3 (children aged 11 upwards) of the sexual health and wellbeing element of the code includes the requirement for learning to include:-

“The knowledge and understanding of the causes, symptoms and impact of conditions connected to sexual and reproductive health and to fertility, including sexually transmitted infections, HIV and reproductive cancers. Understanding and skills needed to minimise risks and seek help.”

It is important that schools are effectively resourced to ensure quality and evidence based learning specific to HIV can be facilitated and this action achieved

22. Cardiff is proud to have recently been successful in our application to join the World Health Organisation’s Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities. Membership of the Network for every Local Authority in Wales has been set as a goal by Welsh Government (Strategy for an Ageing Nation). This collective commitment is intended to drive positive changes and developments that benefit older people. Due to the fact that people are living into older age with HIV, it would seem appropriate to have more focus within the plan specific to older people that works towards overcoming factors that risk their individual wellbeing including lack of targeted prevention programmes, isolation and the additional stigma that older people living with HIV experience.
23. In terms of the challenges to the delivery of the plan the draft consultation response stresses the importance of working together to reach underserved communities and notes the existing pressures on public services as well as the third sector and the importance of building capacity to ensure the aspirations of the plan are achieved.

Consultation

24. Cardiff Council’s consultation response has been drafted following discussions and contact with Terence Higgins Trust Cymru, Cardiff University, Fast Track Cardiff and the Vale colleagues as well as Pride Cymru. Additional research has been undertaken including a review of reports undertaken by the National Aids Trust and the Terence Higgins Trust.
25. Fast Track Cardiff and the Vale held public consultation events in September.

Reason for Recommendation

26. To seek Cabinet's approval of a draft consultation response to the HIV Action Plan for Wales. The aim is to contribute positively to the development of an HIV Action Plan that will effectively progress the ambition of zero transmissions of HIV and eliminate stigma for those living with HIV in Cardiff and Wales.

Financial Implications

27. This report does not result directly in any additional financial implications. It sets out the background to the proposed WG HIV Action Plan for Wales and seeks approval for the Cardiff Council draft response to the related consultation document.
28. It will be necessary to ensure that any financial commitments as a result of new projects and initiatives arising from the action plan and partnership working have clearly identified resource requirements and confirmed funding sources or can be met within existing revenue budgets.

Legal Implications

29. There are no direct legal implications raised by this report. However, in considering this report, regard should be had to:
- (a) the public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, when making decisions, Councils must have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are a. Age; b. Gender reassignment; c. Sex; d. Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality; e. Disability; f. Pregnancy and maternity; g. Marriage and civil partnership; h. Sexual orientation; i. Religion or belief – including lack of belief; and
 - (b) the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and is globally responsible. In discharging their respective duties under the Act, each public body listed in the Act must set and published wellbeing objectives. These objectives will show how each public body will work to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the national wellbeing goals. When exercising its functions, Cabinet should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the wellbeing objectives set by the Council and in so doing achieve the national wellbeing goals. The wellbeing duty also requires the Council

to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Cabinet must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, Cabinet must:

- a) look to the long term;
- b) focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems;
- c) deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well being goals;
- d) work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions; and
- e) involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them.

HR Implications

30. There are no direct HR implications for this report.

Property Implications

31. There are no specific property implications arising from the HIV Action Plan for Wales Report. Where there are any property transactions or valuations required to deliver any proposals, they should be done so in accordance with the Council's Asset Management process and in consultation with Strategic Estates and relevant service areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to approve the draft consultation response as set out at Appendix 2, to Welsh Government's HIV Action Plan for Wales; Eliminating HIV – improving quality of life and tackling stigma associated with the virus – an action plan for 2023-36

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| SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | Jane Thomas Director - Adults, Housing and Communities |
| | 22 September 2022 |

The following appendices are attached:

- Appendix 1 HIV Action Plan for Wales; Eliminating HIV – improving quality of life and tackling stigma associated with the virus*
- Appendix 2 Cardiff Council – Draft Consultation Response*