

# George House Trust Positive Speakers Programme

Pilot Stage Evaluation Report Summary



**george house trust**  
still life with HIV



## Introduction

The Positive Speaker Programme was launched in the summer of 2008 to dispel myths and raise awareness of the reality of living with HIV through 'real life' presentations. The end of March 2009 saw the completion of the pilot stage of the Programme. A total of 32 sessions were delivered to a wide range of groups including schools, FE colleges, healthcare professionals and health and social care trainees.

## Changing Attitudes

The impact of the sessions on people's attitudes towards HIV and HIV positive people was measured through questionnaires, which audience members were asked to complete before and after hearing the talk. We surveyed people's attitudes around who is at risk, life with HIV, the rights of HIV positive people, and working with / being friends with HIV positive people.

- Following the session, there was a positive shift in attitudes around **all of the areas** listed above
- The **most negative attitudes** before the session were around positive people being sexually active, positive people's right to confidentiality at work, and life expectancy of positive people.
- These were also the three areas in which the **most progress** was made following the Positive Speakers' talk
- The number of people who believed they had the right to know a colleague's HIV status **reduced by 50%**
- Negative perceptions of life expectancy with HIV were **66% less** following the Positive Speaker session
- Biggest reduction was in the number of people believing that positive people shouldn't have sex; this was **reduced by 75%**

*"Fantastic, insightful, inspirational, realistic. Both speakers normalised living with HIV. Exploded the myths and perceptions of what it is like living with HIV. Thank you for sharing experiences"*

Healthcare practitioner, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008

*"I felt very moved and it made me look at it differently"*

FE College Student, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008

## Sector Specific

When the evaluation data is divided into peer groups (Healthcare trainees and professionals, FE College students, and School students) the following became apparent:

- The biggest positive attitudes shifts were made with FE students.
- Health Care professionals were the group that held the most positive attitudes both before and after the talk.

## Healthcare

This was the group with the most positive attitudes across all statements after the talk. Evidence of any negative/stigmatising attitudes was almost completely eradicated amongst participants following the session. The few remaining negative attitudes following the talk were around the right to know a colleague's HIV status, with 6% of healthcare participants still believing they did have this right.

*"Excellent, great insight from client perspective. I will try to keep in mind the difference between appearing empathetic and sympathetic. Also lead by example when it comes to treating patients without prejudice."*

Qualified nurse, Manchester University, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009



## FE Colleges

Following talks at FE Colleges significant improvements in attitudes were achieved for perceptions of life expectancy of positive people, and attitudes towards positive people being sexually active. Progress was also made in changing attitudes towards positive people's right to confidentiality at work; the number of students holding a negative view was more than halved from 23% to just 10%. This is a fantastic outcome for the attitudes surrounding confidentiality in the workplace for positive people from a group soon to enter the world of work.

*"I learnt what HIV is and what AIDS is. It's changed my opinion on it totally; I thought it was a dirty disease now I understand that it is not."*

College student, Hopwood Hall College, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008

## Schools

The most significant attitude shifts for the schools groups were again for life expectancy and sexual activity. Prior to the talk, 13% believed that most HIV positive people died young and 22% believed that positive people should not have sex, both these were reduced to 6% as a result of the talk.

*"I will look after myself more & be careful. I thought the talk was amazing and the personal stories were very good. Thank you!"*

School pupil, Withington Girls School,  
27<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## Transmission Routes

In the questionnaire completed immediately prior to the session, participants were asked to identify the main transmission routes in the UK today from a list of possible routes. From this information, we discovered the following:

- 70% could not identify **all main routes\*** of transmission
- 25% could not identify the **most common routes\*\*** of transmission
- 48% believed that HIV could be transmitted through **donating blood**
- 20% believed that HIV could be transmitted through **organ transplant**
- 6% identified **sharing a toothbrush** as a transmission route
- 4% identified **kissing** as a transmission route

\***All main routes of transmission** = unprotected anal sex, unprotected vaginal sex, mother to baby, breastfeeding, and sharing needles.

\*\***Most common transmission** = unprotected anal sex, unprotected vaginal sex and sharing needles

As can be seen in the above percentages, a high number of participants had very little knowledge about transmission routes of HIV prior to the Positive Speaker session.

*"When you hear people with HIV stories, you can understand it more. I learnt how it can be transmitted, the treatments. Thank you for improving my knowledge."*

FE College Student, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008

## Impact on Speakers

Interviews were conducted by an external researcher with a cross section of the Positive Speakers in order to evaluate the impact of the Positive Speakers Programme on the speakers themselves.

- All speakers interviewed voiced positive perspectives on their HIV status
- All speakers interviewed used the word "confident" to describe themselves
- All felt more comfortable talking about HIV with people in their personal life than they were prior to becoming a Positive Speaker

*"Empowering, that's they only way I can describe it"*

GHT Positive Speaker



## Conclusion

Positive Speakers are a very effective tool for combating HIV related stigma and discrimination; they raise awareness, inform people of the facts about transmission and life with HIV, and have a positive impact on the attitudes of participants towards HIV positive people. In addition to these benefits, being involved in the programme also had a positive impact on the speakers themselves; it gave them more skills, confidence and a sense of purpose and achievement.

Ignorance feeds prejudice and educational programmes such as the Positive Speakers Programme are a fundamental part of challenging stigma.

To download the full report please visit [www.ghet.org.uk](http://www.ghet.org.uk)

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The pilot stage of the Positive Speakers Programme was funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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George House Trust is the HIV Voluntary Organisation for the North West of England. We support people living with and affected by HIV and campaign for the best quality of life for all people with HIV.

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