

Responses to HIV

INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

This lesson plan is divided into two sections: Identifying Problems and Taking Action, followed by a homework activity.

Identifying Problems

Use the following two video links to open up a discussion about the problems faced by people living with HIV in the UK today.

Leah's story

<http://www.youtube.com/nationalaidstrust#p/u/9/vw-WiDoIGAU>

Things to flag up:

Individual reactions to the disclosure of HIV status have a very significant impact on the lives of people living with HIV.

Ignorance about HIV is the root of much of the social stigma suffered by people with HIV.

Leah's son's experience of bullying at school – reiterate that there are currently around 20,000 children who live in a family affected by HIV, and many more people who are in some way affected by the disease. It is therefore very important to think about personal reactions and attitudes to the issue of HIV in an everyday context.

Maurice's story

<http://www.youtube.com/nationalaidstrust#p/u/10/qzqGfOrIjMo>

Things to flag up:

Differences in national approaches to HIV – in this instance, the UK and the US.

However, point out that in early 2010, since this video was made, the ban on travel and immigration to the US for people with HIV was lifted by President Obama.

The laws and policies of a country are key factors in shaping that society's attitude to minorities, including people with HIV.

Emphasise that whilst a country like the UK may ensure that the law upholds equality for people with HIV, and that medical treatment is available, free, from the NHS, the reactions of individuals can mean that in practice, people with HIV are denied equal opportunities.

Read out, or ask a pupil to read out the following real life story to illustrate that for some people living with HIV, it can be the social stigma, rather than the medical effects of the disease itself, which has the greater impact on their life:

Real life story

I have been HIV+ for 5 years and have been on antiretroviral therapy for 4 of those years. There have been minor side effects and from the medical point of view I have been very satisfied with my situation. My problems have arisen when I had to disclose to employers (when applying for new jobs). Initially some employers tried to discriminate but soon changed their approach when they were threatened with the DDA [Disability Discrimination Act]. In two jobs I have held, since being diagnosed, there has been a systematic attempt to get me to leave the job, either by trying to make me appear to be incompetent or through false accusations which have made my position very uncomfortable and stressful.

I have also, recently, discovered that there is an awful lot of ignorance about the possibilities of catching HIV from me. My dentist is concerned because they are going to have to perform a tooth extraction and a group of people I met in a pub wouldn't drink out of the same glass as me - even though I had not even drunk out of it myself. The concerning part about these is that, based on recent research, I should not be a risk in either of these situations.

The problems that the 'rest of the population' creates for me makes living with HIV difficult to the point where taking my medication, remaining unemployed and choosing friends carefully appears to be the only comfortable option.

Taking Action

Ask the pupils to brainstorm the different ways in which we can take action to end HIV prejudice, dividing them into three categories: things we can do as individuals, things we can do as communities (e.g. as a school), and things we can do as a society.



INDIVIDUAL

Thinking carefully about our personal reactions to the issue of HIV, and, where it arises, to disclosure. Education is also a personal responsibility – make sure you are informed.



COMMUNITY



Admissions and employment policy: according to the Equality Act (2010), which has recently replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (2005), schools cannot discriminate against pupils or staff because they are HIV positive. They must also make reasonable adjustments to ensure that people living with HIV can work or study there.

This means that HIV positive pupils cannot be denied admission or excluded from a school on the basis of their HIV status, or excluded from areas of the curriculum or other learning experiences such as school trips.

Similarly, all the employees of a school, including teachers, catering staff, and cleaners, cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their HIV status in terms of employment offers or opportunities for promotion, or be dismissed or treated negatively because they are HIV positive.

Educating pupils about HIV.



SOCIETY



Maurice's story highlights the importance of the law in shaping a nation's attitude towards people with HIV, and other minorities. Obama's change to US law, lifting the ban on travel and immigration to the US for HIV positive people shows the ways in which a country can take action to end HIV discrimination.

As Maurice points out, there are already many good things about the UK's attitude to HIV positive people, as well as to other minorities. The 2005 Disability Discrimination Act, which has recently been replaced by the Equality Act (2010), made it illegal to discriminate against people living with HIV from the point of diagnosis.

However there are still things that we need to do as a society to improve the experience of people living with HIV in the UK. Above all good education about HIV throughout society is essential to bringing about an end to HIV prejudice.

Homework Activity

Emphasise that EDUCATION is the key to taking action at all levels of society.

Ask the pupils to create information resources about HIV for other young people. Ask them to make either a leaflet or a poster explaining:

How HIV is transmitted

How it is not transmitted

The Equality Act – what it says and what it means with respect to HIV

School HIV policy – how it reflects the Equality Act

Worksheet

Identifying Problems

Having watched and read the three life stories, list the problems that you think most affect people living with HIV in the UK today.

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Taking Action

Once you have identified some of the problems faced by people living with HIV, brainstorm the different ways in which we can take action to deal with these problems, dividing them into three categories: things we can do as individuals, things we can do as communities (e.g. as a school), and things we can do as a society.

 **INDIVIDUAL**

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 **COMMUNITY** 

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 **SOCIETY** 

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