



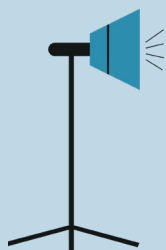
HIV COVID-19 Network Briefing Six



A fortnightly update from the voluntary sector

26 June 2020

1. Spotlight issue this week



Research on the impact of COVID-19

This fortnight's briefing provides a snapshot of the various surveys undertaken by the voluntary sector, both completed and ongoing. It highlights topline findings relating to the needs, experiences and behaviours of people living with HIV and key populations during the pandemic in the UK. If you are aware of work that is not covered here, please let us know and we will endeavor to highlight it in future briefings.

» Learning about people living with HIV

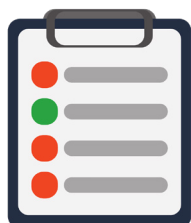
- The Sophia Forum, the UK's leading women's HIV charity, surveyed women living with HIV across their channels as part of their response to an All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry. It received 75 responses.



It found that 45% of respondents have had trouble accessing HIV care during the lockdown period, with 25% saying their main concern during lockdown had been lack of access to their HIV clinic. Another 13% said their main concern was their physical health, those with care needs finding the period particularly challenging, and a further 11% said that the risk of unemployment or furlough as their main concern. Mental health was however the most widely reported challenge; 45% cited it as their main concern during lockdown, with feelings of isolation widespread.

Findings also highlighted how the pandemic had exacerbated existing inequalities, with one Black respondent saying "I fear going out as a Black person but more so now. A Black friend [was] stopped twice in 3 days just for walking in April".

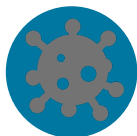
- Positively UK, a peer-led HIV support service, undertook a similar short survey among its service participants. It found similar concerns about access to clinical services, financial and food security, and mental health, but 18% of their respondents found that their adherence to HIV medication had been affected since the beginning of lockdown. Participants cited such challenges as the loss of a routine and poor mental health in staying adherent to HIV medication.



- The UK-CAB Community Survey about the impact of COVID-19 is running until the end of June and can be found [here](#). It is a longer survey designed to get a more detailed picture of the medical backgrounds and healthcare experiences of people living with HIV, including any related to COVID-19. The survey should take up to 30 minutes and there are gift vouchers at the value of £25 for those who complete the survey.

» Experiences of LGBT people

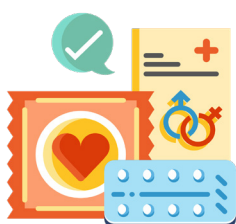
- The LGBT Foundation received 555 valid responses for its survey about the experiences of LGBT people during the crisis. The [report](#) highlights that 42% of respondents wanted mental health support during the period, with this rising to 66% of BAME respondents and 57% of trans respondents.



» Experiences of LGBT people

- Elsewhere it found that 8% of respondents did not feel safe where they were currently staying – this doubled for trans and non-binary people. People cited factors such as strained relationships with family and having to live a closeted lifestyle during lockdown as reasons for poor mental health or lack of safety. 16% of respondents had been unable to access healthcare for issues unrelated to Coronavirus, with this figure rising to 27% for trans people.
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» Sexual behaviour and sexual health



- The GMI partnership released the [results](#) of an online survey on sexual activities, changes in sexual behaviour and access to sexual health services and products among 763 people from 6 April through to 3 May 2020.
- It found that while around 39% of people were not having sex in that period, a similar percentage were continuing to do so, a third of them with a casual partner. These proportions did widely vary across demographics like men who have sex with men, Londoners, or BAME groups. Among those still having sex, around 10% report having reduced their interaction with HIV and STI testing in the period.

» Migrant health

- Migrants Organise and the New Economics Foundation co-authored a report examining the barriers to accessing healthcare for migrants during COVID-19 which can be read [here](#). This report surveyed community groups and migrant organisations across the UK. 57% of respondent organisations reported that migrants have avoided seeking healthcare because of fears of being charged for NHS care and of data sharing among others. It further found that very few respondents (20%) felt that the COVID-19 charging exemption was clear to migrants, and even fewer (9%) that information about accessing healthcare during the pandemic was reaching migrant communities in an accessible format.

2. Further policy updates

- » Updated Government guidance on shielding has been published. From Monday 6 July, those shielding can spend time outdoors in a group of up to six people (including those outside of their household). Extra care should be taken to minimise contact with others by maintaining social distancing. This can be in a public outdoor space, private garden, uncovered yard or terrace. From Saturday 1 August, advice to those shielding will be further relaxed.



Relaxation of the guidance will mean people who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be advised they can go to work or to the shops, as long as they are able to maintain social distancing. This new guidance is for England only. You can find advice on shielding in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#) via the links provided. BHIVA and THT have released a [statement](#) saying “If you are shielding because of HIV (very low CD4 count or recent serious illness related to HIV) and feel concerned or anxious about stopping shielding, we advise speaking to your clinic as the decision to shield is a very individual one.”

- » The One Voice Network (OVN) is a new collective of Black-led organisations and allies established to drive health equality and improve outcomes for black communities in the UK, with a particular focus on HIV. OVN provides a unique platform for black communities to actively engage in HIV policy and practice, you can learn more about its vision and opportunities to engage [here](#).