

Community-led HIV programme Common Ambition Bristol wins National Award.

Pioneering local HIV programme Common Ambition Bristol has won the Commissioning for Patient Experience award at the 2024 Patient Experience Network National Awards.

The winners were announced at a ceremony on 3 October at the University of Birmingham. Emmy Oldenbourg, Sexual Health Nurse at Unity Sexual Health and Temilola Adeniyi, Community Researcher, presented at the event and collected the award on behalf of the Common Ambition Bristol team.

Common Ambition Bristol is a co-produced and community-led programme working to reverse HIV health inequalities experienced by African and Caribbean heritage communities living locally.

It brings together partners from across research, sexual health services, public health and the local VCSE sector: Brigstowe, African Voices Forum, Unity Sexual Health, Bristol City Council, NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) West and NIHR Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) in Behavioural Science and Evaluation at the University of Bristol. It is supported by Bristol Health Partners' Sexual Health Improvement Programme Health Integration Team (SHIP HIT).

HIV is a highly stigmatized condition that disproportionately affects African and Caribbean heritage communities. Common Ambition Bristol empowers community members to work in equal partnership with sexual health professionals to design and implement ways to:

- reduce stigma
- increase access to testing
- increase access to PrEP (a pill that reduces the risk of getting HIV)

This groundbreaking way of working ensures that the voices of African and Caribbean heritage communities are at the heart of decision-making. Members not only shape the project but also play pivotal roles as paid coordinators, outreach workers and community researchers.

Common Ambition Bristol is combatting HIV misinformation and stigma through:

- co-produced multimedia campaigns
- targeted health promotion events
- dialogue with local media

It has set up dedicated HIV and sexual health clinics for African and Caribbean heritage communities to improve access to testing. It is also working with African and Caribbean heritage-owned businesses to promote HIV awareness and distribute self-testing kits.

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David Dravie-John, Director, African Voices Forum Ltd and Community Researchers Supervisor, said:

"This achievement clearly demonstrates the impact Common Ambition Bristol is deriving. We are gradually breaking down the barriers, myths, stigma and discrimination portrayed about the African and Caribbean heritage communities, and steadfastly restoring the trust and confidence for this programme to be embraced. This is a fantastic milestone for all the partners involved in this co-production."

Rami Ghali, CEO, Brigstowe, said:

"It has been a privilege for Brigstowe to be the lead delivery partner of Common Ambition Bristol, working in equal partnership with paid community members and sexual health professionals. Together we have started to break down HIV stigma and increase sexual health testing amongst African and Caribbean heritage communities in Bristol.

"This award is recognition of the hard work and passion of all the organisations and members of the community that have contributed to the programme."

Dr Lindsey Harryman, Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine, Unity Sexual Health, University Hospitals Bristol & Weston NHS Foundation Trust, said:

"We are delighted to be involved in Common Ambition Bristol and this award reflects the very hard work of a dedicated team of community members, community organisations, healthcare staff, researchers and commissioners.

"Common Ambition Bristol has driven positive changes in how we deliver services. We are using this learning to also help other UHBW services address the significant health inequalities which exist within Bristol as part of our Experience of Care Strategy.

"True co-production is challenging but also very rewarding. We are really looking forward to continuing to work with communities to evolve and develop Unity services to better meet the needs of people who live in the city."

Professor Jeremy Horwood, Principal Investigator, NIHR ARC West and NIHR HPRU at the University of Bristol, and SHIP HIT co-director, said:

"The UK Government has set a goal of ending new HIV transmissions in England by 2030. This can only be achieved by address the inequalities faced by

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African and Caribbean heritage communities.

"Common Ambition Bristol is a powerful testament to the strength of community-led action in tackling health inequalities. By creating genuine partnerships and placing African and Caribbean Heritage Communities at the centre of HIV awareness and testing, we are aiming to break down HIV stigma and improve access to testing but also ensure sustainable, long-term change. This innovative work has sparked interest nationwide and sets a powerful precedent for community-led healthcare interventions."

Councillor Stephen Williams, Chair of the Public Health and Communities Committee at Bristol City Council, said:

"This award is acknowledgement of the important and impactful work of Common Ambition Bristol and shows the value of community-led action in tackling health inequalities. The work they do is instrumental in reducing the stigma of HIV and increasing access to testing among African and Caribbean heritage communities.

"Across Bristol we know that around 60 per cent of people who are HIV positive are diagnosed late, and that we have communities who are disproportionately affected by HIV including the African and Caribbean population. It is incredibly important that we continue to break down the stigma around HIV and encourage residents to get tested.

