

FAST-TRACK CITIES LEEDS

COMMUNITIES LEADING ON TACKLING STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH HIV, VIRAL HEPATITIS & TB



BACKGROUND

- Fast Track Cities (FTC) is a global partnership between cities and municipalities around the world who have declared their commitment to ending HIV, viral hepatitis, and tuberculosis (TB) epidemics by 2030.
- In February 2023, Leeds became the first city in the Yorkshire and Humber region to become a FTC.
- By becoming a FTC, we have committed to putting people at the centre of our work to ensure that health responses meet local needs.
- Achieving these commitments requires the elevation of communities and ensuring they have a seat at the table.
- The initiative provides strong local leadership to identify groups most at risk, encourage the uptake of testing and facilitate early access to treatment to help people live healthier lives.
- Addressing stigma and discrimination through community engagement and workforce development is a key component of this approach, an example of this is community grants programme launched on World Aids Day 2023.

To continue to adhere to the Sevilla Declaration commitments, we must continue to ensure communities are at the centre of HIV, TB and viral hepatitis responses.



LEEDS

CHALLENGES

- A challenge to balance honest and unfiltered community voice and values of Fast Track Cities.
- Challenging to encourage grants around TB and viral hepatitis due to the comparatively small number of community groups surrounding these viruses as opposed to HIV.
- Need to factor in the time and flexibility required to support community members.

SUCCESSES

- During the development of the projects:
 - People are feeling empowered and proud of the work they are producing.
 - Doing the projects is encouraging people to talk to each other and begin conversations around stigma.
 - People have given each other peer support and created friendships.
 - It has empowered people to want to do more.
- The projects have created wider health impacts by offering opportunities to build self-esteem and confidence to make a valuable contribution.
- Learnt that storytelling and conversations at community levels takes many forms.
- People's personal stories are more impactful and have greater resonance.
- Taking the lead from communities means:
 - People know their communities better than anyone else.
 - Communities create ways of fighting stigma that are meaningful and that stakeholders and corporate services have not thought of.
 - Communities members are more confident to have honest conversations.
- Bids have been more successful when support has been offered to apply for the grant.

COMMUNITY GRANTS

- Leeds City Council, BHA Skyline and Yorkshire MESMAC are working in partnership to oversee a Fast Track Cities community grants programme.
- Micro grants are awarded to community groups in the Leeds area to express their experiences of stigma and discrimination, and its impacts on people living with HIV, TB, Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C or the effects it has on at-risk groups.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED SO FAR...

Podcast:

Person living with HIV is hosting a series of podcasts to discuss the following:

- Dating
- Pregnancy
- Activism
- Sex & Relationships
- Medication
- Diagnosis

Teddy Bear Testing Week Campaign:

A knitting group are hand knitting 40 bears to be distributed to organisations during HIV testing week 2025. Each bear will contain a HIV fact or debunk a myth. Each organisation are to photograph the bear and tweet the fact, creating a bear trail of improved knowledge amongst the organisations and their wider audiences.

Poster campaign:

A "I had my test, I have treatment, My HIV" Poster Campaign, featuring a local woman living with HIV to encourage people to seek a test and dispel HIV stigma. This poster will be displayed in places of worship and more public places around Leeds such as the side of local buses.

Erasure Poetry:

A project that takes stigmatising texts on HIV, TB and Hepatitis, working with people with lived experience to remove the words and keep the words they want to create a new text. The pieces become a poem and a piece of artwork that will be displayed around the city to challenge stigma.

Refugee Choir:

A refugee choir are writing a song on ending stigma around HIV, TB and viral hepatitis. The song will be released on World AIDs Day.

LGBTQIA+ history inspired quilt:

An LGBTQIA+ youth group are recreating a history inspired HIV quilt to be displayed in local museums. The quilt will be released on World AIDs Day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to BHA Skyline and Yorkshire MESMAC who continue to support this program, and with thanks to the communities and individuals that have created projects to contribute to fighting stigma.

ABBREVIATIONS

FTC - Fast Track City(ies); HIV - human immunodeficiency virus; TB - tuberculosis

AUTHOR

Lucy Simpson - Health Improvement Specialist - Public Health Sexual Health - Leeds City Council
✉ lucy.simpson@leeds.gov.uk

Stigma can only end with honest, real conversation and stories that stem from our communities, which gives people the power to influence change.



@LeedsFTC



fast-track-city@leeds.gov.uk

