

Press release: New PHE figures show decline in HIV diagnosis rates

The decrease in HIV diagnoses in gay and bisexual men represents the most exciting development in the UK HIV epidemic in the last 20 years, when effective treatment became widely available.

Commenting on the figures, Dr Valerie Delpech, Head of HIV Surveillance at Public Health England, said:

This is very good news. It is the first time since the beginning of the HIV epidemic in the 1980s that we have observed a decline in new HIV diagnoses among gay and bisexual men, and is clear evidence that HIV prevention efforts are working in the United Kingdom.

Our success in reducing transmission is due to high levels of condom use among gay men, and a sharp rise in the number of men testing for HIV each year, with those at greatest risk testing more frequently. Early diagnosis is also key to making sure that people benefit from HIV treatments so they can live long and healthy lives and are protected from passing on the virus to others.

With continued investment in testing and diagnosis, the decline in HIV infection which has taken place for gay and bisexual men in London can be replicated in other parts of the country and in all those at higher risk of HIV. HIV testing enables diagnosis and the opportunity for treatment which not only means people can live long, healthy lives but also provides reassurance that the virus cannot be passed on.

It is easy to get tested for HIV. Testing is freely available through GP surgeries, local hospitals and sexual health clinics as well as on self-sampling and self-testing (see NHS Choices for further information). As well as getting tested, using a condom with new or casual partners protects against HIV and other STIs.

1. The [HIV in the UK health protection report and annual HIV data tables](#) comprise the number of HIV diagnoses, late HIV diagnoses and numbers accessing HIV care. Data can be interrogated and analysed at [local authority level](#) via an online tool allowing a range of outputs to be generated.
2. The December 2016 edition of Health Matters, PHE's resource for local authorities and health professionals focuses on [increasing HIV testing](#).
3. The HIV home sampling service offers an alternative to traditional

testing offered by GPs and sexual health clinic. Visit www.freetesting.hiv to find out more about the HIV home-sampling test kit.

4. PrEP Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), has been a contributory factor in the downturn in new diagnoses in gay and bisexual men. Previous trials such as the PROUD trial have shown that HIV PrEP is clinically effective, dependent on drug adherence, and that risk behaviours and other STI infection rates did not increase. PHE is supporting NHS England in the 3 year [PrEP Impact Trial](#) beginning in October 2017. PHE helped finalise the trial design, governance, recruitment and drug procurement processes of the Impact Trial and will continue to be an active and committed partner during its running.