

CASE STUDY ON CHIVA'S RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Context

Young people growing up with HIV in the UK face a number of challenges. Many of the young people who use Chiva's services in the UK describe experiences where they have heard inaccurate information about HIV in schools, such as misinformation about how HIV can be transmitted.

Young people living with HIV can feel powerless in these situations and are fearful to speak out because of the discrimination they may face. People often experience stigma or discrimination if they are living with HIV, and this is often based on myths and stereotypes.

Many young people with HIV experience mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, exacerbated by societal stigma and discrimination. This impacts their willingness to access care and support services.

Furthermore, the stigma surrounding HIV means that families are reluctant to share the diagnosis with schools because of concerns about confidentiality. At Chiva, we have witnessed bad practice in schools when a child or family has shared their HIV status and seen the impact that this can have on the child and family.

Introduction

In 2022, Chiva worked with a group of children and young people living with HIV - known as the Chiva Youth Committee (CYC) -, to address their concerns about HIV misinformation and HIV stigma in schools. The group were tasked with creating a resource or campaign that would tackle these issues.

Aims

The aim of their resource/campaign was to ensure that teachers and schools are equipped to educate pupils with accurate information about HIV and to ensure that children living with or affected by HIV are treated as equals in schools if they should choose to share their status.

Method

INITIATIVE PARTNERS



European
AIDS Treatment
Group



OBSERVER MEMBERS

- European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)
- European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- Fast Track Cities
- UNAIDS
- UNITE

The initiative is enabled by sponsorship provided by Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare

Chiva worked with the CYC to develop an education toolkit, *Empowering Students: End HIV Stigma*, to be used in school lessons alongside a screening of Chiva's award-winning short film, *Life Growing Up*. The film provides insights into the lived experiences of young people growing up with HIV in the UK. The toolkit includes guidance for teachers including up-to-date HIV information; use of appropriate language around HIV and interactive lesson plans.

Chiva also provides schools with the *HIV in Schools* guidance document which provides those working in education with an insight into the issues for those affected by HIV, and sets out an action plan that schools can follow when a child or family shares their HIV status to ensure that they will receive the appropriate support whilst confidentiality is respected. It means that children living with HIV can be offered the same kind of support that pupils living with any chronic condition would be offered.

Use of these resources can lead to reduced HIV stigma within schools which will positively impact people living with or affected by HIV by reducing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and help improve overall quality of life.

Results

Chiva has facilitated a number of HIV awareness sessions in school assemblies, promoting the use of the toolkit. The sessions received good engagement from pupils, who expressed a genuine interest in the topic.

Chiva has also supported schools where information has been shared about a child living with HIV to ensure that the best practice guidance is followed and the child and parent/carer offered the appropriate support.

Recommendations

Chiva recommends a wider use of these resources by stakeholders across Europe, given their successful contribution in our experience in the UK. The toolkit may provide additional support to existing efforts to address HIV misinformation and stigma in schools. The materials are available for external use, either in their current format or can also be adapted for local use.

<https://www.chiva.org.uk/education>

Toolkit: <https://www.chiva.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Chiva-School-Toolkit.pdf>

Life Growing Up: [LIFE GROWING UP \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Guidance: <https://www.chiva.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/HIV-Schools-Guidance-2022-final.pdf>

Author: Amanda Ely

Organisation: Chiva

Date: 28 May 2024

Email: amanda.ely@chiva.org.uk

Phone Number: 0117 9055149

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