ACHIEVING VIROLOGICAL CONTROL AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TAILORED Peer MENTORING: SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSIONS OF A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT SUPPORTED BY THE FAST TRACK CITIES (FTC) INITIATIVE

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**BACKGROUND**

**Adherence**
Incomplete adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and difficulty engaging with clinical care results in poor health outcomes.

**Barriers**
- Stigma (incl. self)
- Mental Health
- Migration
- Housing
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Isolation
- Culture / language
- Navigating healthcare

**Funding**
The three-year project was funded by the Fast-Track Cities initiative.

**Peer Support**
Bridging communication, support navigating health system and empowering.
PROJECT AIM

60% of patients who engaged with the peer mentor to achieve a VL < 200 copies/ml within 12 months of referral being made.

Promotion
Promotional material, referral pathway and first contact script

Support Plans
Individually tailored and holistic support plans in collaboration with client, including signposts and referrals

Teamwork
The FTC peer mentor was embedded at both the Harrison Wing and Caldecot Centre clinics
METHODOLOGY

COVID-19
Remote work & immunisation
Disruption of service

CLINICS
Embedded since July 2021 (MDT & ward rounds)

M-POX
Immunisation
Disruption of service

STRIKES
Disruption / adaptability across teams

Cost of Living
Impact on access to HIV care
The median CD4 count at referral was 187 cells/ml (range 8-1147 cells/ml) with median viral load 82,000 copies/ml.
RESULTS

Virology

Percentage of patients engaged with the peer mentor with an undetectable viral load (<200 copies/ml) over months since referral to FTC mentor.

Graph showing the percentage of patients with undetectable viral load over months.
RESULTS

Themes
- HIV Knowledge (53)
- Disclosure (46)
- Mental Health (36)
- Adherence (28)
- Drug & Alcohol (18)
- Housing (12)
- Isolation (9)
- Relationships (7)
- Financial Support (7)
- Group Work (4)

U=U
98% of patients engage achieved a VL < 200 copies /ml at some point during mentoring

Feedback
100% would recommend mentoring to others
80% feel confident about staying undetectable
100% feel more empowered to manage their own health
Lessons Learnt
- Genuine partnership between clinicians and third sector
- Simplifying information
- Patients priorities
- Intensive and individualised approach for most complex clients
- Empowering patients
- Feedback loop

Recommendations
- Clinical supervision, pastoral support
- Peer support embedded in clinic
- One-to-one and group-work for:
  - Young people with vertically acquired HIV
  - Migrant communities
  - Older people living with HIV
  - Afro-Caribbean communities
  - MSM
THANK YOU
“The service that is being offered is invaluable and I’ve learnt a lot that I could possibly pass on to someone in need. My mentor has even made me rethink a lot about my life as I never have before. So thank you!”

“Thanks so much for your support in this journey. You’ve really inspired me to really take my life back and I’ll forever be grateful for that. I know what is to truly smile after being down for so long”

“I would absolutely recommend mentoring to others. I wish I had known about it long time ago as I battled mental health on my own for years. Many don’t know how to ask for help, so to have someone who ‘comes without asking’ just to say help is at hand is quite valuable.”
THANKS!