

HIV Action Plan for Wales - Eliminating HIV – improving quality of life and tackling stigma associated with the virus – an action plan for 2023-26

Deadline 14.09.2022

Response on behalf of Learning Disability Wales

Learning Disability Wales is a national charity representing the learning disability sector in Wales. We work with people with a learning disability and their families, Welsh Government, local authorities, disabled people's organisations and the voluntary sector to create a better Wales for all people with a learning disability.

Contact

Dr Grace Krause, Policy Officer: grace.krause@ldw.org.uk

Response

We will respond to question 4: Are there any resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or services among other things) that are not referred to in our Plan, but will be necessary in achieving the aims and actions detailed within this Plan?

We are glad to see a plan to tackle HIV in Wales and to increase awareness and support while reducing stigma. We would like to see accessibility integrated into this proposal better, especially in terms of learning disability and neurodiversity. This is particularly important given that LGBTQ+ people with a learning disability sometimes struggle to get good information and support in terms of being safe. The learning disability sector faces challenges when supporting heteronormative relationships, let alone LGBTQ+ relationships. These challenges are due to a range of factors including a lack of support for staff and parent/carers; the prevailing view that people with a learning disability will never progress past an adolescent relationship; and a lack of power and agency to make decisions relating to relationships and intimacy. A person with a learning disability will face these barriers in addition to the stigma, negative perceptions and discrimination associated with being LGBTQ+.

Therefore LGBTQ+ people must have the right to access information and advice in a format suitable to their needs. Welsh Government must provide funds for all information to be available in easy read (including easy read Welsh) as well as reaching out to people to make sure they receive this material.

In practice, this means making sure there is representation of people with learning disabilities within the different points of the Action Plan:

- At point 5.2 you write about plans to include voluntary and community groups in implementing the plan. It is important that people with a learning disability and those that support people with a learning disability are included in this.
- In Priority 1 (Prevention) you mention educational campaigns around PrEP. These campaigns must be developed and delivered with accessibility at their heart. We note that on the [Ask me about PrEP website](#) there are a range of resources in plain English that will be accessible for many people. However, we would encourage you to add resources translated into easy read English and Welsh to enable more people to understand the information.
- In point 15 you describe the HIV awareness that healthcare staff should have. It is important that there is an overlap between learning disability/neurodivergence and the HIV awareness that is being taught. Sometimes people with a learning disability and neurodivergent people are seen as not being fully adult or not “sexual beings”. It is important that healthcare staff do not discount “indicator conditions” because the person they are treating has a learning disability or neurodivergence.
- Priority 5 – Tackling Stigma. The actions in this point must again be done in an accessible way. All information produced around this should also be produced in easy read format and distributed to people with a learning disability.