

Committee(s): Health and Wellbeing Board – For decision	Date(s): 23.11.2018
Subject: Endorsement of HIV stigma campaign: “U=U”	Public
Report of: Dr Penny Bevan, Director of Public Health	For Decision
Report author: Adrian Kelly, Lead Commissioner for Sexual Health	

Summary

In recent years, the City of London Corporation has played a key role in working with other authorities in London to tackle sexually transmitted infections and their associated stigma. This work is ongoing through innovative approaches, including those being taken by the London Sexual Health Programme and the sexual health e-service.

People living with HIV are particularly vulnerable to stigma and discrimination, fuelled by the fear of HIV transmission. This is despite the fact that modern antiretroviral treatments can reduce the amount of virus in an individual’s bloodstream until it is undetectable, and therefore cannot be transmitted to others.

The [Prevention Access Campaign](#) seeks to tackle HIV stigma, through asking organisations to endorse a consensus statement acknowledging that they recognise ‘Undetectable Equals Untransmittable’ (U=U) – i.e. an individual living with HIV with an undetectable viral load cannot pass on the virus to others.

By endorsing the U=U consensus statement, and encouraging City businesses to do the same, the Board will further demonstrate their support and leadership in championing the wellbeing of Londoners, as well as contributing to the City Corporation’s Responsible Business Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Endorse the ‘Undetectable Equals Untransmittable’ (U=U) consensus statement.
- Agree that the City Corporation’s Business Healthy programme should encourage City employers to endorse the U=U consensus statement.

Main Report

Background

1. In recent years, the City of London Corporation has played a key role in working with other authorities in London to tackle sexually transmitted infections and their associated stigma. This work is ongoing through innovative approaches, including those being taken by the London Sexual Health Programme and the sexual health e-service.
2. HIV stigma is fuelled by the fear of HIV transmission – the ‘Undetectable Equals Untransmittable’ (“U=U”) campaign is a potentially powerful way in which HIV stigma will be addressed.
3. The U=U statement is based on evidence from the [PARTNER study](#) which reported that the risk of HIV transmission, when people are on effective treatment, is negligible. The statement has already been endorsed in the UK by many leading stakeholders including the Lancet Journal, the British HIV Association, the National AIDS Manual and the Terrence Higgins Trust.
4. The U=U consensus statement reads:

“People living with HIV on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) with an undetectable viral load in their blood have a negligible risk of sexual transmission of HIV. Depending on the drugs employed it may take as long as six months for the viral load to become undetectable. Continued and reliable HIV suppression requires selection of appropriate agents and excellent adherence to treatment. HIV viral suppression should be monitored to assure both personal health and public health benefits.”

5. Endorsement of the statement also supports the achievement of the UNAIDS target for 2020, which London works to under the [Fast Track Cities Initiative](#) supported by the Healthy London Partnership. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, signed the declaration on behalf of London in January 2018. If agreed, this endorsement is timely as it will coincide with National HIV Testing Week, as well as the 30th anniversary of World AIDS Day on 1 December 2018.

Current Position

1. By signing the ‘Undetectable Equals Untransmittable’ (U=U) consensus statement, the City of London Corporation’s Health and Wellbeing Board would further demonstrate their leadership for improving the wellbeing of all Londoners, thereby helping to support a sustainable capital. We understand that the City of London Corporation would be the first Health and Wellbeing Board in the UK to sign the statement.
2. The City of London’s endorsement of the consensus statement also provides an opportunity to encourage other employers in the Square Mile to sign-up, through

[Business Healthy](#). This would help to amplify the message across a potential half a million-strong workforce, which is both diverse and international. The consensus statement is a means to raise the profile of the importance of individuals being aware of their own HIV status, through access to testing, and timely adherence with medical treatment. This is in line with the City of London Corporation's support of the [Do it London](#) campaign.

3. 'Undetectable Equals Untransmittable' (U=U) is a simple but important message based on a solid foundation of scientific evidence. It has already been successful in influencing public opinion, causing more people with HIV (and their friends and families) to comprehend that they can live long, healthy lives, have children, and never have to worry about passing on their infection to others, as long as they take their medication.
4. The clarity of the message makes it easier to promote the benefits of treatment, which will encourage more and more people with HIV to seek treatment, bringing the HIV community one step closer to the elimination of the unfounded and outdated stigma still faced by many people living with HIV today.
5. By challenging the root causes of HIV related stigma, the campaign can:
 - Help to improve the emotional wellbeing of people living with HIV
 - Reduce barriers to HIV testing and thereby reduce the time between infection and diagnosis
 - Help to prevent new infections, by reducing barriers to treatment
 - Underline the importance of ensuring that all people have access to treatment, and are informed, empowered and supported to be adherent.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

6. This proposal aligns to the following outcomes of the Corporate Plan:
 - Outcome 2 – People enjoy good health and wellbeing
 - Outcome 3 – People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential
 - Outcome 5 – Business are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible
7. This proposal supports the objectives of the City of London Corporation's Responsible Business Strategy 2018/23, namely the three priorities within outcome 1 (Individuals and communities flourish), which are:
 - people's wellbeing
 - equal opportunities
 - diverse organisations

8. The Responsible Business Strategy has an action to: *Continue to promote the safety of groups facing discrimination and harassment – through funding, facilitation and advocacy* (action 1.1.5). People living with HIV are a group who face discrimination solely because of their HIV status. By endorsing the consensus statement and encouraging others to do the same, the City of London Corporation will be contributing the advocacy aspect of this action.
9. This proposal also supports the objective of the City Corporation to use its convening power and lend its voice and influence to highlight and advocate for responsible practices within its networks and partnerships.
10. The proposal also supports the City of London Corporation's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer, by making a clear statement that people living with HIV will not be discriminated against in an employment context.

Conclusion

11. The report recommends that the Board endorse the U=U (Undetectable Equals Untransmittable) consensus statement. This pledge aims to further dispel the stigma and lack of understanding surrounding the of transmission of HIV. By endorsing the U=U consensus statement, the Board will further demonstrate their support and leadership in championing the wellbeing of Londoners, thereby helping to support a sustainable and diverse capital.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – None

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