



## BACKGROUND



The Welsh Government recently released its draft HIV Action Plan for Wales for 2022 to 2026.



It set out 26 actions to eliminate new HIV infections, improve quality of life and end stigma by 2030.



An integral part of this plan is to develop and deliver a peer support (PS) service for people living with HIV (PLWH) in Wales.

### AIM

Utilise the experiences and views of service users and providers, alongside the research evidence, to identify factors impacting the development of PS for PLWH in Wales.

## APPROACH



**1** A **systematic review** of the current published research relating to HIV peer support.



**2** An **online survey** exploring the views of PLWH in Wales about a peer support service.



**3** **Interviews** with service providers who have experience of designing, setting up and/or delivering PS services for PLWH.

## 1. SYSTEMATIC REVIEW [15 STUDIES]



Peer support can have a positive impact on clinical outcomes, and be an effective approach to decrease stigma, depressive symptoms, and anxiety. A PS service that meets the UK National Standards can be applied in the UK to decrease HIV-related burden and more studies are needed to continue evaluating the impact on quality of life and effectiveness of the approach in the UK.

## 2. ONLINE SURVEY WITH PLWH [N=154]

Overall, there was a positive response to a HIV peer support service. Many were interested in using or supporting PS. However, it would not suit everyone and should be part of a range of support packages. The main benefit of PS from a service user perspective is derived from sharing experiences.

The service model needs to be adaptable with in-person, virtual and group elements. Managing confidentiality is paramount and a clear connection between the service and healthcare would provide legitimacy and safety. Wales has some specific issues to deal with in setting up an All-Wales PS service, including geography and funding.

## 3. INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS [N=13]

There was significant support amongst service providers for the development of a PS service in Wales. Key themes covered:

- (1) **core principles** of the service,
- (2) the necessary structures within a **host organisation**,
- (3) understanding the **context in Wales**,
- (4) understanding **what success would be**, operationally / outcomes.

For Wales-based service providers in particular, their responses were informed by the failure of the previous PS services, making people wary. A new service will need to overcome this narrative through co-design with service users and local providers, clear communication, strong and steady integration with the existing system (particularly clinical services) and a robust, transparent system of monitoring and accountability.



## CONCLUSIONS

The development of a PS service for PLWH in Wales would be broadly welcomed both by PLWH and service providers, but it must be done with significant care and with the long-term in mind. This development will start the process of bringing Wales in line with the British HIV Association 2018 standard that everyone living with HIV should have access to quality-assured peer support.

## NEXT STEPS

This is the opportunity for Wales to create its own PS service. Those leading the process need to understand the Wales-wide context; they need to learn from all the work that has gone before and create a quality service, developed by and for the people living with HIV in Wales.

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