



GROWING TOGETHER FOR  
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

## EVALUATION REPORT ON TWO CHIVA FAMILIES' WEEKENDS DELIVERED IN 2025

**"This camp is so helpful. The work you do here is so important. Until I came to the camp felt like I was living with part of my life behind a mask, I was able to remove my mask at camp."**

(Parent/carer at Chiva Families' Weekend)



# Chiva Families' Weekend

## SUMMARY

Families from across the UK and Ireland were eligible to attend a Chiva Families' Weekend if they had a child or young person who was growing up living with HIV. Siblings were included. Young adults who had grown up with HIV and were now parents could also attend with their child/children. Two family weekends were delivered in 2025, in May, over three nights in Oxfordshire and in October, over two nights in Herefordshire.

The events were publicised via HIV clinic networks, promoted by the Chiva staff team, via the 4M Network, social media and through contacting previous attendees of Chiva family events, and parents/carers of young people involved with Chiva. Some families applied themselves while others were referred by health professionals from their HIV clinic team.

The weekends were completely cost-free for families to attend, with all accommodation, meals and activities covered. All travel was organised and paid for by Chiva to avoid any barriers to access.

## OBJECTIVES

The weekends aim to:

- Provide a safe supported space to enable families to build relationships with other families with shared experiences around HIV.
- Offer families the opportunity to begin building a peer network from which to develop ongoing peer support and plan further meet-ups.
- Explore family experiences around HIV to support increased communication between parents/carers and their children around HIV.
- Focus on wellbeing and enable sharing of strategies, ideas and examples of how to achieve good quality of life and live well with HIV.

## PARTICIPANTS

### PARTICIPANTS



- ♥ **29** different family groups attended across both events, comprising **97** individuals in total.
- ♥ **42** were parents/carers and **55** were children and young people.
- ♥ **17** of the children were age seven and under and accessed dedicated staffed crèche provided at each event.
- ♥ Families travelled from across UK regions including several families attending from Scotland.

## DELIVERY TEAM AND SUPPORTING STAFF

The team delivering the weekend comprised nine team members: two Chiva staff, Chiva Steering Group and Chiva Associates /4M Network representatives, a crèche manager and two crèche volunteers.

## PROGRAMME

The weekends focused on wellbeing, self-care, and creative expression using art to facilitate exploration of experiences and to express feelings. With plenty of opportunity for informal socialising and building friendships.

Structured facilitated sessions were provided for parents/carers, young people and younger children, as well as 'families together' sessions.

Friday evenings begin with a whole group session, working on a group agreement and adding arrival thoughts and feelings to the group tree which is put up on the wall to capture participant experiences across the weekend and to represent growth together.

# Chiva Families' Weekend



The group tree has evolved as a key activity during the Families' Weekends which captures the journey of the group together over the weekend and provides creative space for reflections. It also offers a visual representation of the journey travelled and has been a successful approach enabling both children and adults to contribute their reflections.

On Saturday, the programme is designed to offer a range of experiences from creative arts-based sessions together as a family group, to wellbeing focussed activities and information workshops.

Young people spend some time with their family groups to contribute to arts and communication focussed activities together, and when parents/ carers attend information focussed workshops young people take part in outdoor activities, sports and games.

Younger children aged seven and below attend the Crèche and have their own programme of planned activities which includes exploring the natural environment where the weekends are held.

The family together art sessions this year included making family flags which represented journeys and identities. Family members would talk through experiences together and decide how to capture these.

Many then chose to share with the wider group what their family flag depicted, taking this opportunity to share testimonies around their journey with HIV in their family. These shared testimonies were often emotional moments across the weekend with families choosing this time to share previously hidden stories and feelings. These moments provided witness to the evident safety and trust established in the group which enabled such sharing between families.

# Chiva Families' Weekend



'Building stronger conversations at home' is a facilitated family conversation session which creates a space for parents/carers and children to spend time having intentional conversations. The activity uses conversation prompts and ranges from light and fun topics to HIV-related conversations, aiming to gradually build more comfort and ease with having conversations about HIV and other important topics together as a family.

The last family together sessions take place on Sunday with a whole group nature walk, an opportunity for relaxation in a natural environment and more gentle conversations. Before departure, families also make 'Hope Jars' together which capture hopes and wishes for the future as a family which can be revisited after the event and provide an ongoing memento from the weekend.



# Chiva Families' Weekend

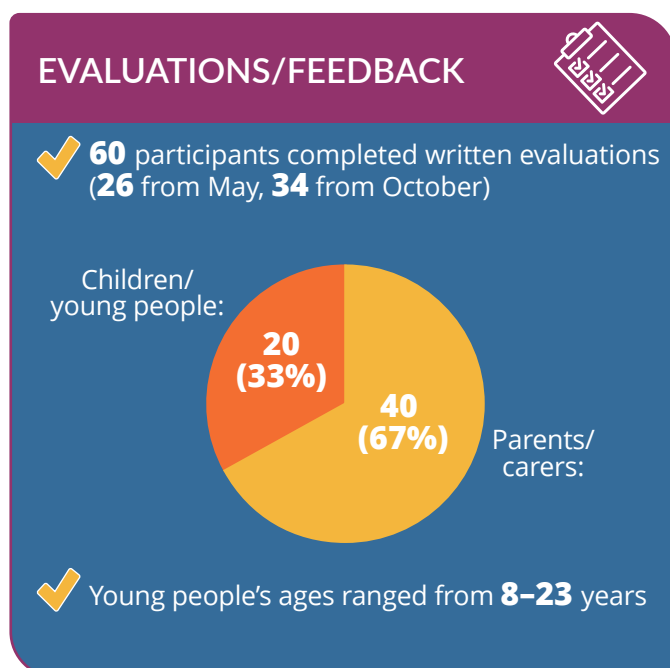
Wellbeing sessions included yoga, mindfulness and pebble painting, and journaling at the Oxfordshire event. At the Herefordshire event yoga was replaced with swimming sessions at the centre's own private pool, which was really enjoyed by parents/carers and children and young people alike.

On Saturday evening the focus was on social time, including a campfire and music, outdoor games on the field for children and young people and indoor games and a reading corner.

A fun karaoke party has become a recurrent feature of the Families' Weekends and provides much needed fun and lightness where parents/carers and children can all join in.

## FEEDBACK ON THE EVENTS

Participants were asked to complete evaluation forms at the end of each weekend. Further data to support evaluation is taken from session feedback, staff observations over the weekends, and staff debrief meetings afterwards.



## KEY OUTCOMES

### Importance of Peer Connection

Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the value of meeting other families also living with HIV. 51 responses (85%) stating this as 'Very important.' 8 responses (13%) as 'Quite important,' and just one response stating it is a little important.

Themes connected to community and connection with others were the most frequently cited benefits of attending the weekends. This demonstrates the critical value of peer support for families living with HIV.

**'Meeting others with similar experiences.'**

**'Sharing stories and feeling less alone.'**

**'Building new friendships and reconnecting with existing ones.'**

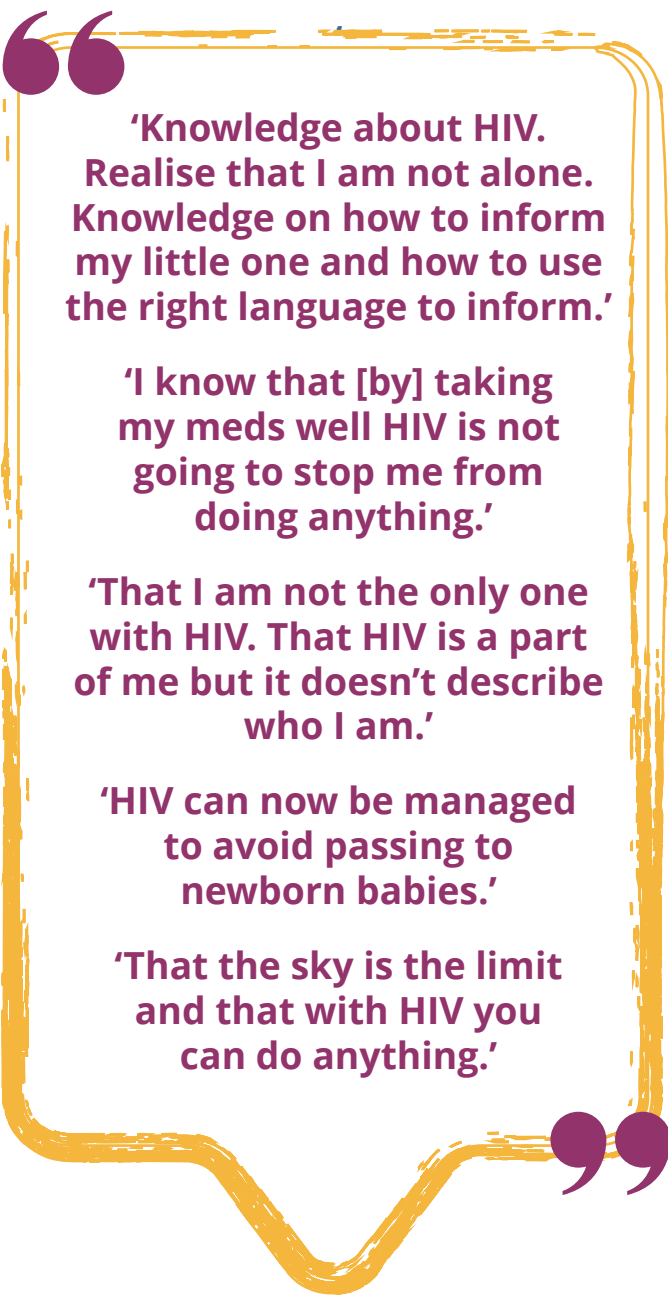
**'Safe space to talk openly about HIV.'**

**'I have learned that everyone's journey is different but sharing experiences helps and realise that you are not alone.'**

# Chiva Families' Weekend

## Improved Understanding and Changes to Feelings around HIV Reflecting Increased Hope

When asked what new knowledge or understanding they had gained from attending the event, participants frequently described changes in feelings or increased understanding around HIV. This suggests attending the event had affected previously held beliefs and fears.



“  
‘Knowledge about HIV. Realise that I am not alone. Knowledge on how to inform my little one and how to use the right language to inform.’  
‘I know that [by] taking my meds well HIV is not going to stop me from doing anything.’  
‘That I am not the only one with HIV. That HIV is a part of me but it doesn’t describe who I am.’  
‘HIV can now be managed to avoid passing to newborn babies.’  
‘That the sky is the limit and that with HIV you can do anything.’  
”

## Emotional Impact

Participants were asked to describe how they felt at the end of the weekend. All the words used were resoundingly positive.

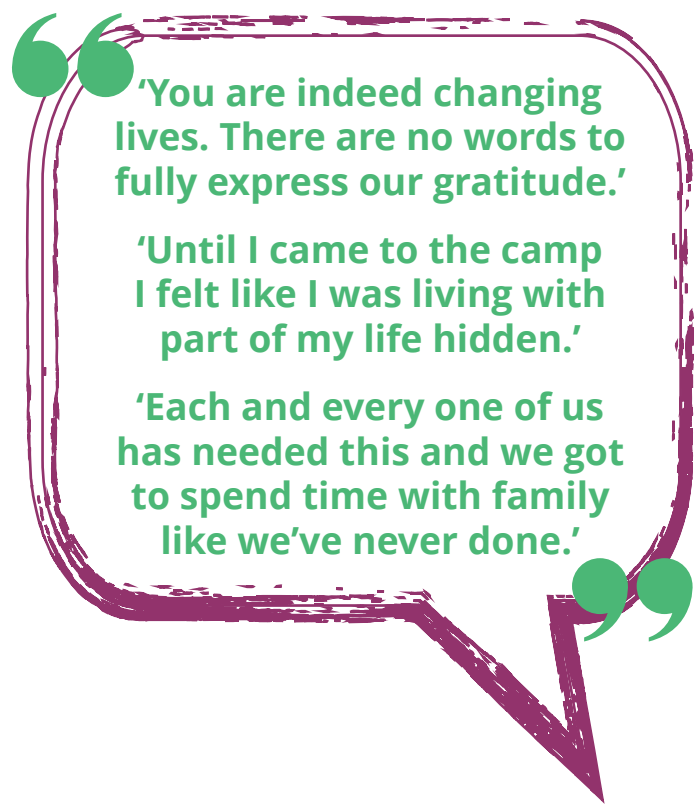
There was a sense of being empowered, with words such as **Fearless, Inspired, Motivated** and **Confident** chosen.

Also a focus on improvements to wellbeing with words such as **Relaxed, Hopeful, Energised, Happy, Grateful,** and **Satisfied** chosen.

It was noticeable that many people experienced a transformed sense of their emotional wellbeing and this transition was reflected in descriptions of having arrived sad, confused, even depressed but leaving with gratitude and optimism.

## Gratitude

Participants were keen to express their appreciation for being able to attend the event. Many chose to give testimonies at the end of the weekends and also included such expressions in the final evaluation.



“  
‘You are indeed changing lives. There are no words to fully express our gratitude.’  
‘Until I came to the camp I felt like I was living with part of my life hidden.’  
‘Each and every one of us has needed this and we got to spend time with family like we’ve never done.’  
”

# Chiva Families' Weekend

## What Worked Well

### Activities

- Swimming was mentioned 11 times in the evaluation forms (\*only available at the October event)
- Kayaking/canoeing, outdoor activities and biking were mentioned by young people as key enjoyments over the weekend.

### Workshops and Opportunities for Learning

People valued the opportunity for learning provided in the information workshops and through discussions with others across the weekend. Mentioning specifically: the opportunity for learning about HIV management and hospital appointments; information on benefits (DLA, carer support); HIV-related language and how to avoid self-stigma with language; and strategies on how to talk about HIV to children. It was also mentioned that workshops were facilitated effectively.

### Practical Elements

Both venues provided good amenities for the events.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTED BY PARTICIPANTS

### Most Common Suggestions

- **Duration:** There were multiple requests for longer stays.
- **Activities:** More outdoor activities were suggested, such as increased sports options.
- **Food:** There were some requests for food improvements and the importance of providing diverse food options.
- **Practical suggestions:** Non-shared bathrooms are preferred. Also a more central UK location to reduce travel time and Saturday travel to avoid late travel on Fridays after school.
- **Workshop balance:** Some young people wanted fewer workshops, and more activities.

- **Demographics:** It was mentioned that increasing attendance by dads would be helpful and more teenage participants.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY

In conclusion, the evaluation highlights a clear opportunity to build on the programme's strong foundations by extending the residential offer in response to consistent demand. Ensuring a balance between activities and workshops that reflects the differing needs of age groups in families attending.

Consideration may be given to location to reduce travel burden for families and scheduling journeys for Saturdays would be helpful to avoid late arrival on Friday evenings.

At the heart of future development of Chiva's programme planning for families, it will be essential to maintain the programme's core focus on fostering meaningful peer connections, encouraged by the supportive facilitation that participants consistently praised, enabling change to happen in relation to feelings and understanding of HIV.

The gently supportive environment offered during the Families' Weekends serving to strengthen communication in families and build communities can be life transforming as witnessed in the testimonies shared and evaluation content.

Continuing to work on delivering the best experience to the different age groups attending and age-specific activities for children and young adults, and exploring opportunities for increasing advocacy and provision of information around welfare rights would further strengthen the overall offer for families.



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