



Longitudinal evaluation of a psychosocial residential intervention among adolescents living with HIV in the UK:

Impact on HIV knowledge, treatment self-efficacy and psychosocial wellbeing

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1. BACKGROUND

Adolescents living with HIV may experience:

- HIV literacy and treatment challenges
- HIV-related stigma and self-stigma
- Emotional and psychosocial challenges
- Social isolation due to secrecy around their HIV

STUDY AIM

Evaluate the impact of a structured multi-year residential psychosocial intervention on HIV knowledge, treatment self-efficacy and psychosocial wellbeing.

2. METHODS

Mixed-methods longitudinal evaluation across multiple programme cycles

QUANTITATIVE

- Pre- and post-programme questionnaires measuring:
- HIV knowledge
 - Treatment understanding
 - Self-efficacy
 - Emotional wellbeing
 - Peer connectedness

QUALITATIVE

- Peer-to-peer interviews
- Free-text responses in questionnaires
- Structured observations
 - Reflective activities
 - Participant artwork

4. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

PRE - Baseline questionnaire



5 DAYS Residential programme



POST - End of camp questionnaire. Peer-to-peer interviews.

OUTCOMES ASSESSED

HIV knowledge

Transmission • Medicines • Adherence

Treatment understanding

Biomedical concepts

Self-efficacy

Confidence discussing HIV

Psychosocial wellbeing

Aspirations • Self-worth • Feelings around HIV

Peer connectedness

Relationships • Reduced isolation

3. THE RESIDENTIAL INTERVENTION

A structured five-day annual camp called "Freedom to Be" for young people growing up living with HIV

Age range:
11-17
years

~75-90
Participants per
cohort

Delivered
annually since
2010

Aims:

- Enhance HIV knowledge and understanding
- Reduce social isolation
- Enhance self-esteem, confidence and aspirations

Comprising:

- HIV themed workshops • Whole group activities • Outward Bounds • Creative Arts sessions • Guest Speakers

Delivery team:

- Chiva staff • Camp Leaders¹ • Key Workers²

¹ Young people aged 18-24 who have grown up with HIV providing a peer-mentor role.

² Volunteers providing pastoral care, many of whom have grown up with HIV.

5.RESULTS

Key findings across the years

↑ HIV literacy

Strongest gains in knowledge were around transmission facts (including U=U), how HIV medicines work and importance of adherence

↑ Aspirations

Improved emotional resilience and self-worth, and enhanced hopes for the future

↑ Connection

Greater peer connectedness and psycho- social well-being with strong relationships built at camp and maintained over the years

↓ Isolation/self-stigma

Consistent qualitative evidence of reduced isolation and self-stigma – expressing a 'normalization' of self identity

LESS CONSISTENT GAINS

Participants showed less accuracy when describing complex biomedical concepts such as CD4 cell function and Viral load

6. WHAT PARTICIPANTS TOLD US

"THIS CAMP CHANGED HOW I SEE HIV FROM FEAR AND SHAME TO STRENGTH AND PRIDE. I FOUND COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE AND HOPE"

Reduced Stigma

"I'VE LEARNED THAT IF YOU TAKE YOUR MEDS AT THE RIGHT TIME CONSISTENTLY, EVENTUALLY YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SPREAD IT AS IT'LL BE TOO UNDETECTABLE."

Improved HIV knowledge

"THAT I CAN BE OPEN AND CONFIDENT ABOUT MY HIV. HIV DOESN'T CHANGE ME. I LEARNED ABOUT HOW TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS AND NOT TO KEEP YOUR HIV TO YOURSELF AND TRY TO TELL PEOPLE MORE ABOUT IT."

Improved psychosocial well being

"I LEARN'T THAT I AM ABLE TO TALK IN FRONT OF A LOT OF PEOPLE."
"I LIKE CHALLENGES."
"I CAN FACE MY FEARS."
"I LEARN'T TO BE ADVENTUROUS."

Improved confidence

7. CONCLUSIONS

Residentials can offer an intensive psychosocial support intervention which can significantly improve HIV-literacy, self-efficacy, peer connectedness and emotional wellbeing, and enhance confidence & future aspirations

Meeting peers living with HIV has been consistently identified as critical to supporting positive identity development, helping to reduce HIV stigma and sense of difference among peers

Ongoing HIV literacy support is needed in clinic and community settings to reinforce complex biomedical knowledge for continued improvements to HIV literacy and self efficacy



Watch the Chiva documentary
Freedom to be:
15 Years of Chiva
Camp



Chiva