

Transforming Adolescent HIV Care: Lessons from a Co-Designed, Integrated Young Adult Clinic Model in Leeds, UK

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Background

Adolescents and young adults (YA) living with HIV can face risks of reduced engagement with loss of familiar support during transition from paediatric to adult care. Whilst also managing the effects of lifelong HIV. In Leeds (UK), a Young Adult Clinic (YAC) was created through a partnership between paediatric and adult clinicians with involvement from young people (YP), creating a holistic youth-friendly service, integrating clinical care with psychosocial and peer support. The service sits within a wider Leeds HIV service pathway spanning paediatric, young adult and adult care.



Leeds HIV Pathway

Paediatric HIV service

- Two clinics per month - the first is the Family & Young People transition clinic. Team: paediatric HIV consultant, adult HIV/ Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) consultant, paediatric HIV clinical nurse specialists (CNS) and Chiva support worker. Cohort: n=21.

Young Adult Clinic (YAC)

- Three dedicated clinics/year - scheduled during university/college holidays - plus monthly multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting. The MDT includes adult and paediatric HIV consultants, HIV CNS, HIV psychologist, Chiva support worker, engagement worker and administrative staff. Cohort n=55.

Adult HIV clinic

- Flexible appointments available weekly via adult clinic team - HIV consultant/CNS, pharmacist, psychologist, admin team and engagement worker. Cohort n=2,500+.



Aims of the YAC

- Provide a safe, welcoming and youth-friendly environment.
- Integrate clinical, psychosocial and peer support.
- Improve engagement and retention during transition to adult services.
- Co-design care with young people rather than designing it for them.



The YAC approach

- Flyer/text reminders.
- Flexible appointments and drop-in with late clinic opening time (3–6pm).
- Separate waiting area with: snacks, music, games, yoga and socialising to encourage peer support - helping to make adult care feel less clinical and more welcoming.
- Linked with Young Adult support group supported by Chiva staff.
- Choice of clinic discussed during transition; included in Chiva's 'All About Me' tool which provides a structured, patient-centred transition pathway from early childhood through to transfer into adult services.



Download
All About Me



Youth Friendly Service Features

Flexible access to clinics

- Choice appointments 5 days/evenings weekly; 3 clinic sites across West Yorkshire; shared care for those attending university locally.

Continuity

- Same nurse/doctor/Chiva support worker can remain involved through transition to adult care; same city-centre location and same centre as family attends.

Communication & engagement

- CNS phone contact, WhatsApp, young people's board/webpage, plus online peer support.

Youth ownership

- The YAC clinic model is continually shaped by young people's questionnaires, feedback of experience.

"Comfortable atmosphere."

"Able to have more support."

"I enjoyed meeting people."

"I know everyone and they are all friendly."

"I enjoy playing games and chatting to everyone."

"Makes me feel more comfortable being with my age group."

"Relaxing and friendly." (YP feedback on YAC)



Early Outcomes and Impact

- Improved engagement with services
- Positive feedback from young people
- Better continuity of care during transition
- Stronger MDT working and cross-site collaboration
- Increased opportunity for peer support
- Young people describe the clinic as comfortable, friendly and supportive



Strengths

- Continuity through to age 25+
- Same city-centre location
- Shared care if at university locally
- Flexible clinic access and choice
- Online and in-person peer support
- Opportunity to 'reinvent' care
- Partnership between health care and HIV support organisations
- Supported, fun introduction to adult care



Challenges

- Larger adult HIV centre can overwhelm YP
- Sexual health focus can feel different for YP transitionning from Paeds
- YP needing to take greater responsibility for appointments/medication
- Limited drop-in times
- No community nurse presently
- Maintaining peer connections within cohort



Lessons Learned

Key Lessons

- Young people must be at the centre of service design and delivery.
- A dedicated clinic space for young people creates ownership and belonging.
- Multidisciplinary working is essential for holistic support.
- Flexibility, including university-holiday timed clinics, can improve attendance.
- Peer support can reduce isolation and build confidence.
- Ongoing evaluation and co-production help the service evolve with young people's needs.

Future Directions

- Expand the model and explore additional clinics
- Continue involving young people in shaping the service
- Evaluate longer-term outcomes across Leeds
- Maintain flexible, multidisciplinary and peer-supported care



Conclusions

- Integrating the YAC into the HIV care pathway demonstrated that youth-friendly, co-designed services can improve engagement, continuity of care and support overall wellbeing for YPLHIV. Helping to create sustainable, effective transition services.
- Choice of care remains important and collaborative approaches between paediatric and adult care and HIV support organisations is key.