



Politicians of all parties pledge to tackle HIV under the next government

Westminster, 27 November 2014

Yesterday politicians of all parties met with members of the HIV community at the House of Commons to discuss their plans to keep HIV as a priority under the next government. Conservative Party Vice Chairman Mike Freer, Liberal Democrat Health team member Baroness Liz Barker and Shadow Public Health Minister Luciana Berger each spoke on key issues for voters in the HIV community, and outlined how the different parties would address them.

At the 'Defining Leadership to tackle HIV' World AIDS Day event hosted by the Halve It Coalition and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on HIV & AIDS, political leaders agreed that successfully combatting the public health challenge posed by HIV required a cross-party approach to keep it high on the political agenda, and that full implementation of NICE public health guidance on HIV testing was vitally important.

25 MPs, Peers and Councillors pledged to support the Halve It coalition in its goals to halve late diagnosed and undiagnosed HIV through national and local action. The event was attended by people living with HIV, advocates, clinicians, community organisations and policymakers, all of whom came together to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for those living with HIV and to

commemorate those who have died. Dr David Asboe, Chair of the British HIV Association, a founder member of the Halve It campaign, described the event as ‘a wake-up call for politicians to take urgent steps and ensure that the policies they have developed to tackle HIV are fully implemented and lives saved across the country.’

Jane Ellison, Public Health Minister, said: ‘I fully support the aims of the Halve It campaign, the Government is committed to reducing late diagnosis and the number of people who are unaware that they have HIV. People living with HIV can expect to live a long and healthy life if they are diagnosed early which is why our sexual health strategy focusses on prevention and testing. We are testing more people than ever, with fewer diagnoses, which shows we are moving in the right direction.’

Halve It is a national coalition that focuses on the expansion of HIV testing services, on the basis that early testing of HIV saves lives and also results in substantial savings to the public health budget. Since its inception in 2010, Halve It has galvanised national and local cross-party support for HIV testing, and is supported in its aims by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Andy Burnham, Shadow Secretary of State for Health, said ‘Much more needs to be done to tackle HIV in this country. Everything from awareness around prevention, to early diagnosis, treatment and care. A key part of the solution lies in collaboration across stakeholder groups, nationally and locally. The Halve It campaign is an excellent example of local and national organisations and individuals uniting around an important issue and driving change.’



Notes for Editors

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Halve It is a coalition whose members represent the following organisations:

- African Health Policy Network
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on HIV and AIDS
- British Association for Sexual Health and HIV
- British HIV Association
- Department of Health*
- Elton John AIDS Foundation
- Gilead Sciences Ltd
- HIV Clinical Reference Group
- HIV Pharmacy Association
- Local Government Association*
- MEDFASH
- National AIDS Trust
- National HIV Nurses Association
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence*
- NAZ Project London
- Positively UK
- Public Health England*
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Physicians
- Scottish HIV and AIDS Group*
- Terrence Higgins Trust
- Tri-Borough Public Health Service*



*Observer Member

In the UK over 100,000 people live with HIV every day of the year; 24% of these are undiagnosed and 42% are diagnosed late. The sooner HIV is diagnosed, the sooner appropriate care can begin, and thanks to advances in medical treatments the life expectancy of someone living with HIV has increased markedly in recent years. By ensuring that HIV testing becomes routine there will be significant long-term savings: If the estimated 4,000 UK-acquired infections diagnosed in 2011 had been prevented, £1.9 billion in lifetime treatment and clinical care costs would have been saved.

Speakers at the 'Defining leadership to tackle HIV' World AIDS Day event:

- Baroness Gould of Potternewton (Chair)
- Mike Freer MP, Conservative Party Vice Chairman
- Luciana Berger MP, Shadow Minister for Public Health
- Baroness Barker of Anagach, Liberal Democrats Health and Social Care Team

The Halve It coalition has been funded by Gilead Sciences Ltd.