

PRESS RELEASE

NAT calls for new health bodies to tackle late diagnosis of HIV

London, 09 May 2012

“Halve It”, a broad coalition of leading experts and advocates in HIV and AIDS, welcomes the renewed call by the National AIDs Trust (NAT) for the urgent prioritisation of HIV testing in its new ‘HIV testing action plan’ which provides vital strategic guidance to health bodies on tackling the serious issue of late HIV diagnosis in the UK.

Indeed, a recent Health Protection Agency report estimated that the total number of people living with HIV is set to reach 100,000 this year. It is also estimated that in 2010, half of people diagnosed with HIV were diagnosed late, and nearly a quarter (24%) of all those currently living with HIV were unaware of their condition¹.

Pamela Nash, MP for Airdrie and Shotts and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on HIV and AIDS, welcomes the plan, advising that: “It has been proven that testing early for HIV saves lives and protects public health. Putting this plan into action will help us to meet our aims of the Halve it campaign: to halve the number of people living with late and undiagnosed HIV in the UK by 2015.”

“HIV testing is at the heart of any effective strategy for tackling HIV in the UK” says Yusef Azad, Director of Policy and Campaigns at the NAT, “Our action plan provides a framework for health bodies, both national and local to think about HIV testing and their responsibilities”.

In his foreword to the action plan BAFTA award winner Dr Christian Jessen calls for support for the publication: “as outlined in this vital strategy document HIV testing is key to prevention. The UK must move from reliance on its traditional ‘opt-in’ model of voluntary HIV testing to an ‘opt-out’ approach across the range of healthcare settings including all newly registering patients in general practice, and all general hospital admissions, in every high HIV prevalence area across the country”.

At a time when every penny counts, halving undiagnosed HIV by 2015 will mean fewer new HIV infections, fewer early deaths, reduced hospital admissions and AIDS-related illness, and more money saved by the NHS. It is estimated that the prevention of one new HIV infection would save the public purse between £280,000 and £360,000 in direct lifetime health costs².

The action plan, ‘HIV testing action plan: To reduce late HIV diagnosis in the UK, Second Edition 2012’ which was published on the 08 May 2012, can be downloaded by clicking [here](#). To view the NATs press release please click [here](#).

For further information:

Rob Walton

Secretary to *Halve It*

Tel: 07771 756716

Email: Rob@halveit.org.uk

Website: www.halveit.org.uk

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

- African Health Policy Network (AHPN)
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on HIV and AIDS
- British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH)
- British HIV Association (BHIVA)
- Gilead Sciences Ltd
- HIV Pharmacy Association (HIVPA)
- London Sexual Health Programme
- Medical Foundation for AIDS and Sexual Health (MedFASH)
- National AIDS Trust (NAT)
- National HIV Nurses Association (NHIVNA)
- Sex, Drugs and HIV Group of the Royal College of General Practitioners
- Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)

The coalition calls upon all levels of government to halve the proportion of people diagnosed late with HIV and to half the proportion of people living undiagnosed by 2015. These targets are achievable. The *Halve It* coalition is funded and supported by Gilead Science Ltd and the British HIV Association.

001/UK/12-05/CIAR/1057

¹ Health Protection Agency. HIV in the UK: 2011 report. Published November 2011.

² Health Protection Agency. 30 years on people living with HIV in the UK about to reach 100,000. Volume 5 No 22; 06 June 2011.