

Enhancing HIV testing in GP practices and pharmacies in a region of disparate prevalence: an MDT approach

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Background

- Within the Hampshire and Isle of Wight (HIoW) catchment served by Solent NHS Trust for HIV and sexual health services there are locations with high prevalence rates for HIV infection. 34 to 74% of HIV infections are known to have been diagnosed 'late' (CD4 <350) across the region between 2017-19.
- National guidelines recommend GP practices and community pharmacies provide clinician-led opportunities for testing based on local HIV rates and/or indicator conditions that may present to them. However, practice varies across the patch and there are areas of dynamic HIV prevalence within, which can make the provision of area specific resources challenging and this can be confusing for non-HIV health care professionals.
- If GP practices or community pharmacies were aware that they sat in an area of higher HIV prevalence and had a deeper understanding of the signs and symptoms that HIV cause in individuals presenting to their services, HIV testing in these non-HIV settings would increase.

Method

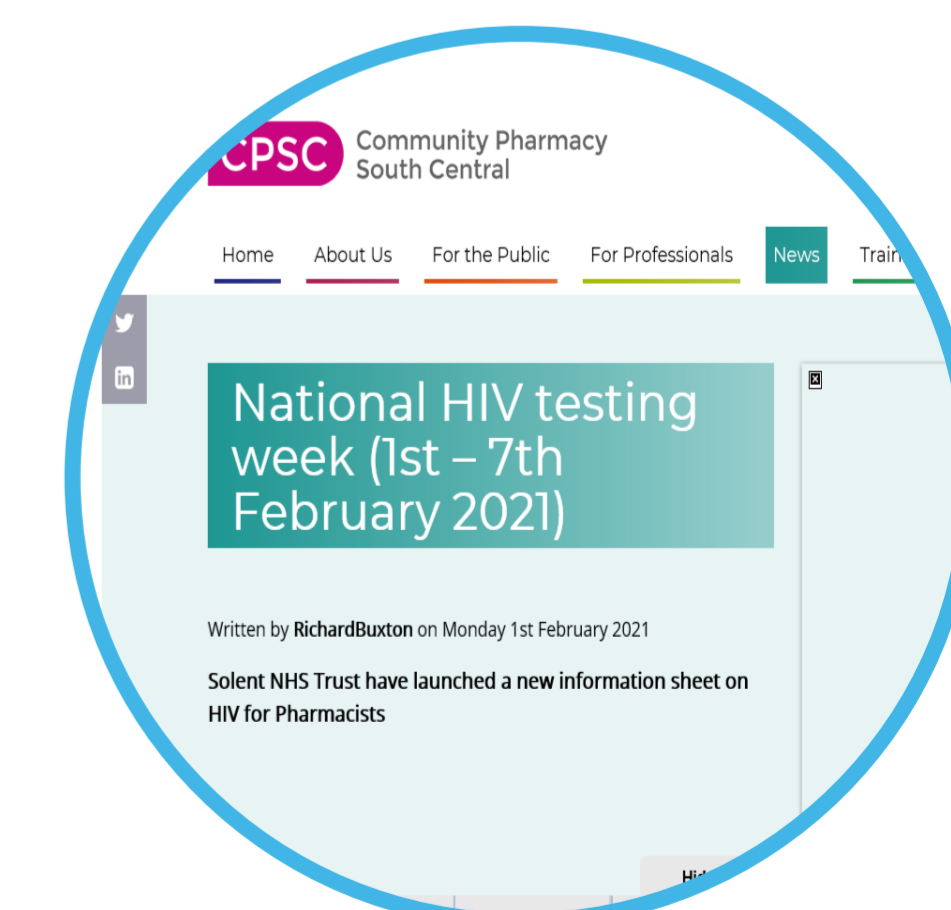
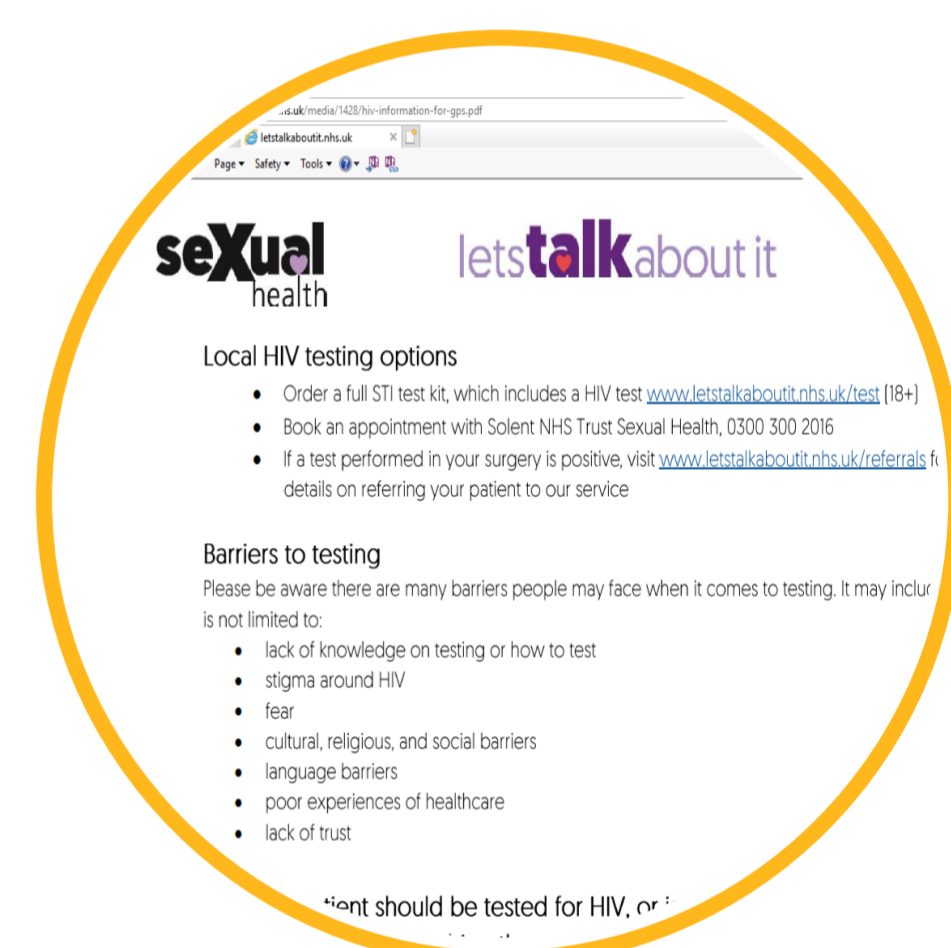
- A multidisciplinary team was formed to focus on enhancing GP and pharmacist testing for HIV testing week 2020, which was pushed back due to the Covid-19 pandemic to February 2021.
- The team comprised of two pharmacists, a GU/HIV physician, a sexual health promotion practitioner and the Network and communications development manager, all working within sexual health. The group met regularly to consider their experiences of HIV testing among the GP and community pharmacy sector throughout the region.
- The following narratives were explored: community dispensing pharmacy experience, local enhanced pharmacist training pathways competencies, outcomes of GP investigations following late HIV diagnosis incidents, recent GP exercises to identify patients requiring Covid shielding letters and clients' perspectives and outcomes of past health promotion and HIV testing efforts.

Results

- The study MDT produced two HIV testing resources as web-based digital information sheets, one for GPs and one for pharmacists.
- Common to both resources were sections on why HIV testing is important and avoiding late diagnosis, benefits of HIV treatment and long-term health outcomes. A snapshot of higher risk populations and local HIV testing options were included as well as hyperlinks to request postal HIV tests.

- In the pharmacist resource, links to e-learning programmes provided by the Centre for Pharmacy and Postgraduate Education (CPPE) were included. The CPPE have two courses, one for HIV and another for Sexual health in pharmacies.
- By including a CPD activity within the resource, it was felt that the resource would also facilitate pharmacists to build on any interest in HIV with pharmacist-targeted learning activities that could also contribute to their professional learning log.

- The resources were distributed via the CCGs to local GPs and via the Community Pharmacy South Central group to pharmacists and to local pharmacies via our commercial HIV medication provider
- Regional doctors now incorporate the link into correspondence with GPs/hospital doctors



www.letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk/hivinfo

HIV Information Sheets for GPs and Pharmacists

Solent NHS Trust Sexual Health Services are proud to launch information sheets for GPs and Pharmacists working in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight.

GPs

The GP HIV information sheet contains information on the following:

- Why HIV testing is important, and avoiding late diagnosis
- Benefits of HIV treatment and long-term health outcomes
- Which populations are generally at higher risk of acquiring HIV?

Conclusion

The teams in-depth understanding of local communities through outreach work and variety of practices enabled the production of a tailored resource to develop non-HIV professionals by addressing barriers and build confidence in offering tests. By collating prevalence recommendations, indicator conditions and risk stratification tools, this pack can be used by professionals in low and high prevalence alike and provides a steppingstone for an individual to gain a deeper understanding in HIV.

For those considering producing a similar resource, it would be our recommendation to invite local GPs and community-based pharmacists to the working group to enhance the level of knowledge and engagement within your HIV service and beyond.