



WORLD AIDS DAY

Report on HIV and AIDS in the City and Hackney

20

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- World AIDS Day, celebrated on **1 December**, is a day when people come together to **honour lives lost** and **show support against HIV and AIDS-related stigmas**.
- HIV is a virus that can harm the immune system and, if not treated, can lead to AIDS.
- Both City and Hackney are areas of extremely **high HIV prevalence**.
- Around **36% of newly diagnosed HIV** among City and Hackney residents were diagnosed at a **late stage** of infection, which was **lower than** the average for **London and England**.
- New HIV diagnoses in Hackney were almost **equally acquired** through sex between men and heterosexual contact.
- In Hackney, **men**, residents aged **25-34**, and people of **white ethnicity** were most often diagnosed with HIV.
- Recent evidence from the new opt-out blood-borne virus testing program shows that certain groups, like people of **black African ethnicity** and those in the **most deprived areas**, have the **highest rates** of new HIV diagnoses **when tested opportunistically**.
- To prevent HIV, Do It London promotes four key strategies: maintaining an **undetectable viral load**, using **condoms**, taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (**PrEP**), and getting regular **testing**.
- In 2022, the City and Hackney **exceeded the targets** set by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS **for diagnosis, viral suppression** and **antiretroviral therapy uptake**.
- **79%** of people with a PrEP need in the City of London and **81%** in Hackney **started or continued using PrEP**, higher than the rates in London and England.
- On World AIDS Day, you can show support for people with HIV by **wearing a red ribbon, raising and donating money to the National AIDS Trust**, and engaging in **conversations** about HIV.

HIV AND AIDS IN CITY AND HACKNEY

World AIDS Day, on **1 December**, is dedicated to bringing people together to fight against HIV and AIDS. Since 1988, communities have joined together on this day to **honour lives lost** and **show support against HIV and AIDS-related stigmas**. (1)

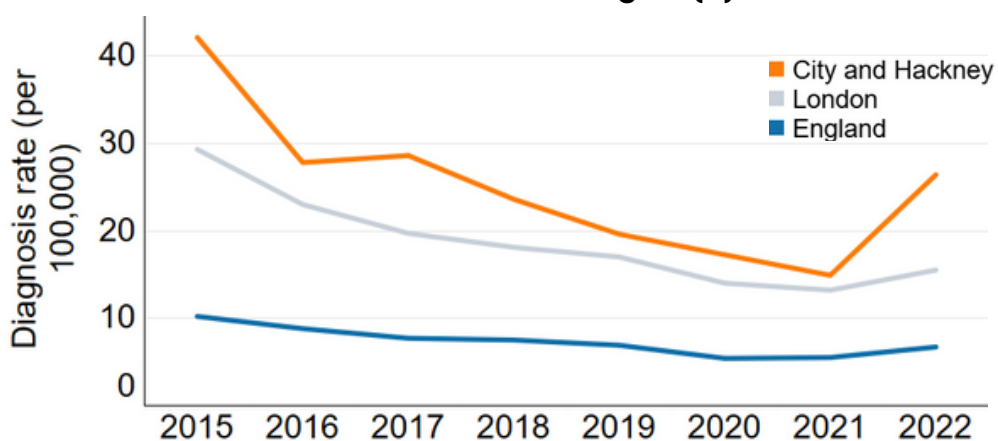
HIV is a virus that damages the immune system and, if left untreated, **can lead to AIDS**. A person would be considered to have AIDS when their immune system has been severely damaged by HIV, making them very vulnerable to life-threatening infections and cancers. (2)

Both City and Hackney are areas of extremely high HIV prevalence

In 2022 the **City** of London had the **second-highest prevalence** rate of HIV **in England**, behind Lambeth, while **Hackney** had the **11th highest** rate. (3)

City and Hackney have consistently reported a higher rate of new HIV diagnoses than London and England over the past eight years. Although, following a steep decline, rates had **nearly aligned with those in London** by 2021. However, the rate of new HIV diagnoses increased again in 2022. (3)

Figure 1: New HIV diagnosis rate per 100,000 over time and by area of residence, all ages. (3)



BY POPULATION GROUP

POPULATION GROUPS MOST OFTEN DIAGNOSED WITH HIV

Hackney **men**, those aged **25-34** years, and people of **white** ethnicity were the demographic groups most often diagnosed with HIV. (8)*

MEN

Across **London** as a whole, diagnoses were more likely among older age groups, with the highest proportion of new diagnoses being recorded among people aged **35-49** years. (4)

25-34

However, while this holds true for those who choose to get tested, results from the **new opt-out blood-borne virus (BBV) testing programme** in hospitals have indicated that certain population groups, such as individuals of **black African ethnicity** and those from the **most deprived IMD quintiles**, are more likely to test positive for HIV than others when tested opportunistically. (5)

WHITE

ROUTE TO TRANSMISSION

In 2022, new diagnoses of HIV in Hackney were **almost equally acquired** through sex between men and heterosexual contact. (5)

47% acquired through sex between men

45% acquired through heterosexual contact

*Note: An issue has been identified with UKHSA's HIV Spotlight data, indicating underestimated diagnosis rates from two London clinics. As a result, the data presented here is subject to change.

PREVENTING HIV

HIV transmission can be prevented through various measures: using **condoms**, pre-exposure prophylaxis (**PrEP**), post-exposure prophylaxis (**PEP**), **regular testing**, **needle exchange** and **maintaining an undetectable viral load**. Ongoing campaigns by [Do It London](#) emphasise the significance of prevention.



Condoms

When used correctly and consistently, condoms are an effective way to **prevent HIV**, sexually transmitted infections (**STIs**) and unwanted pregnancy. They work by stopping the exchange of fluids between partners.

Condoms are available for purchase at high street and supermarket stores. However, most **sexual health clinics**, many **youth services** and some **GP practices** offer **free condoms**. Young people aged up to 25 can also access free condoms from many pharmacies in City and Hackney by signing up to the [Young Hackney condom scheme](#).

PrEP

PrEP is a treatment that is **taken by people without HIV** to lower their risk of getting infected. It works by stopping HIV from entering the body and reproducing.

In 2022, 79% of people with a PrEP need in the City of London and 81% in Hackney initiated or continued using PrEP, higher than the rates in London and England. (3)

Figure 2: Population that initiated or continued PrEP use by area, 2022 (%). (3)



Data from the City and Hackney **Sexual Health Needs Assessment** showed that in 2020, **older, white, and gay** residents were the most likely populations to **use PrEP**. (10) This aligns with general HIV prevalence patterns.

However, recent evidence from the **new opt-out BBV testing programme** reveals that certain other groups have **higher rates** of new HIV diagnoses **when tested opportunistically**. This suggests that reported HIV prevalence patterns might not accurately represent the reality, and therefore that **PrEP may not be used equally by groups in need**. (5)

PrEP is available for anyone from a community at high risk of HIV or with sexual partners from these networks.

In City and Hackney, PrEP can be accessed, along with other sexual health services, at the following local clinics: **Clifden Centre, Ivy Centre, and 80 Leadenhall**. Work is being taken to further widen access.

You can find out more information about PrEP and where to access it on the **[Homerton University Hospital's Sexual Health website](#)**.

PEP

PEP is a treatment that can **halt an HIV infection when taken within 72 hours** (three days) of exposure, ideally within 24 hours. While not guaranteed to work, it serves as an **emergency measure**, recommended as a last resort, such as when a condom fails.

Like PrEP, PEP is accessible through sexual health services. However, if needed over the weekend or outside of office hours when clinics are closed, the best option is to visit an **Accident and Emergency department**.

Regular Testing

Regular testing allows people to benefit from **early diagnosis** so that they can start **treatment** and **live a healthy life**, while an **undetectable viral load** following successful treatment means that they cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners.

Figure 3: Population aged 15 and over that were diagnosed with HIV at a late stage of infection, by area, 2020 to 2022 (%). (3)



Between 2020 and 2022, 36% of newly diagnosed HIV among City and Hackney residents were diagnosed at a late stage of infection. This is lower than in London and England. Nationally, those **diagnosed late** in 2019 were more than **seven times as likely to die within a year** compared to those diagnosed at an earlier stage. (3)

City and Hackney residents can access HIV testing at **any local sexual health clinic** and can also obtain **free home kits** through the **Sexual Health London portal** or by contacting **Positive East** by telephone on 020 7791 2855 (Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 5 pm) or email at talktome@positiveeast.org.uk.

Needle Exchange

Needle exchange programmes play an important role in preventing HIV and bloodborne infections among drug users by offering clean needles, education, and support services.

The City & Hackney Recovery Service, commissioned by Hackney and City and delivered by Turning Point, provides a needle exchange service for residents facing substance use challenges. To find out more, visit their [webpage](#), call on 0345 144 0050, or email the team at CityandHackney@turning-point.co.uk or turningpoint.city-hackney@nhs.net.

Maintaining an undetectable viral load

When people with HIV **maintain an undetectable viral load**, they can't transmit the infection to others.

Being undetectable, or '**virally suppressed**', is defined as having 200 copies of HIV per millilitre of blood or less. This can be achieved by taking HIV medicine known as **antiretroviral therapy**, or **ART**.

U = U

Undetectable = Untransmittable
≤ 200 copies of HIV per millilitre of blood

ART is extremely effective; when taken as prescribed, patients can achieve an undetectable viral load, usually within **one** to **six months** of starting treatment. (6)

You can find more information about accessing ART on the [**NHS' HIV and AIDS Treatment page**](#).

96% **Receiving ART**
City and Hackney residents with HIV in 2022. (7, 8)

97% **Virally suppressed**
City and Hackney residents that received ART in 2022. (7, 8)

City and Hackney's diagnosis, ART uptake and viral suppression figures **exceed the targets** set by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (**UNAIDS**) and **Fast Track Cities**. These targets aim to **diagnose 95%** of all people with HIV, provide **ART for 95%** of those diagnosed and achieve **viral suppression for 95%** of those treated by **2030**. (9)





SUPPORT AVAILABLE

In addition to the health services already mentioned, wellbeing support is also available for individuals and families affected by HIV.

Positive East provides holistic health and wellbeing support to people with a positive HIV diagnosis. To find out more, contact the team by telephone on 020 7791 2855 (Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 5 pm) or email at talktome@positiveeast.org.uk.

Similar support, including peer support groups, one-to-one counselling, information and advocacy on a range of issues, is also available to children, young people and families affected by HIV via Body & Soul. To find out more, visit their [webpage](#), call on 0207 923 6880, or email the team at referrals@bodyandsoulcharity.org.

A full list of support services available around HIV and sexual and reproductive health more generally can be found on the [Hackney Sexual Health website](#).



As we reflect on the impact of HIV and AIDS in City and Hackney, it is vital to raise awareness and support for those affected. On **World AIDS Day** you can **wear a red ribbon** to show support for people with HIV, raise and donate money to the **National AIDS Trust**, and engage people in **conversation**. Visit World AIDS Day's **Join In** page for other ideas on what you can do to help.

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Cite this report as: City and Hackney Public Health Intelligence Team. World AIDS Day - Report on HIV and AIDS in the City and Hackney. (2023)