



Leeds Skyline

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Issue 3 - Spring 2011

Welcome to the Third Issue of the Leeds Skyline Service Newsletter!

In this issue, we will be updating you on our services and looking at the different groups and services offered by Skyline and the changes that will be occurring from April 2011. You will also read about our successful fundraising events in December 2010 and February 2011. I hope you all enjoy reading this third issue and that you continue to contribute to future events and activities. If you have any questions or information you would like included in the next newsletter, email leedsskyline@thebha.org.uk

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What happens at Skyline?

Leeds Skyline offers support for anyone living in Leeds who is living with or affected by HIV. The service provides 1-2-1 and group support in a city centre office that has been transformed into a welcoming and confidential environment. Our staff and volunteers are able to provide advocacy, emotional and practical support tailored to each individual's needs, covering areas such as treatment, health and well-being, housing and family planning. Our holistic service includes massage therapies and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. We can also refer clients on for additional specialist services across the UK.

The Skyline prevention team works to provide information, motivation and power to African communities at risk of HIV in Leeds, to help prevent onward transmission. This is done through the mediums of training, workshops and other local community events and through the giving of resources such as condoms. We enjoy working with our team of positive speakers who share their experience and knowledge of living with HIV to help other gain a better understanding. Both of our teams challenge the stigma faced by people living with HIV across the city.

Our current support groups :



Monday	Men's group for Heterosexual Men. Monthly from 4pm - 6pm
Tuesday	Mums & pre-school kids Monthly 12 - 2pm PACT (positive & coping together) for gay and bi-sexual men weekly 6 - 8pm
Wednesday	Women's group Monthly 1pm - 3pm.
Thursday	General drop in - 1pm -3pm. Skyline Late - Third Thursday of every month. 6pm - 8pm.
Friday	United as One: Young People's group Fortnightly 5pm- 7pm. Sexual health & social activities for 13- 25 yr olds
Saturday	Close Links - for families & friends of those living / affected by HIV

A word from our Director

It has been a challenging but successful year for BHA Leeds Skyline. We have worked with and for individuals and communities to support and promote good health and well being through our many projects and services.

The current political and economic climate is scary and uncertain and the cuts and changes in commissioning mean that the landscape for the whole of the voluntary sector is certainly rocky and a bumpy ride is to be expected. Most local authorities have reduced funding available for services for the next few years and for Skyline this means that from April onwards we have had to make cost efficiencies to the effect of 15% of our social care budget.

Skyline has never faced a more challenging time when planning and delivering services for people living with, affected by or at risk of HIV. During this time, the needs of our communities and service users still need to be addressed. As an organisation, we need to reflect on these changes, always with the aim of improving the quality and effectiveness of our interventions to ensure we meet those needs. However, the commitment and dedication from staff and volunteers, and the continued support our funders - Leeds City Council and NHS Leeds - we will ensure our services are creative and explore all viable options in order to maximise every opportunity.

We have completed an in depth evaluation of our expenses and restructuring of our staff team in order to reduce our overheads and absorb as much as possible to reduce the effect on service delivery and ultimately our service users. Unfortunately we have still had to make some reductions which will effect some services here at Skyline. This means from April we have made a reduction to some staff hours and reduced the number of sessions we are able to provide for complementary therapies. Therapies will still be available twice a week, with daytime and evening access for massage, reflexology, Indian head massage and reiki. We will also be limiting the provision of refreshments and travel expenses to provide only for those in most financial need.

During the last year, through our fundraising activities in the community and support from local businesses and organisations, we were able to raise vital funds to support our work and our Crisis Fund. We hope that with continued support from our local community and our dedicated volunteer team, to be able to continue to raise essential funds for people living with HIV in Leeds. If you would like to get involved or support any of our activities to support our work, please do get in touch.

A heartfelt thank you to our staff, volunteers, service users and funders.

GROUP UPDATES

P.A.C.T

Positive And Coping Together is a weekly support group on a Tuesday from 6 - 8pm for HIV positive men who are Gay, Bi sexual and Trans-gendered. This group has been running successfully for 7 years and during that time over 120 men have used the group for weekly support.

It is a safe confidential space where men discuss their thoughts, beliefs and attitudes towards HIV and the impact these have on their lives. The support comes from the group members who have a vast knowledge and experience of living with HIV and the group is facilitated by a gay member of staff.



P.A.C.T Social

On the [23rd of November](#) last year, PACT went on a social outing to The Leeds Climbing Wall. The night was a great success– all the guys who went along on the social thoroughly engaged with the experience and had a fun time. They all commented on how good it was to have a change from the usual drop in at Skyline, and were very keen on doing more social events in the future.

Women's

This runs one Wednesday each month 1- 3pm at Skyline. The group gives a valuable opportunity for women living with HIV to share experiences, ask questions & support each other. The group has enjoyed topics such as hopes, aspirations & motivation, safety at home, coping with loss, and jewellery making.

Women that regularly attend completed an evaluation this quarter and described the group as a space where they can talk freely with one another and feel supported by peers and staff. Many also spoke of improvements in their confidence as a result of accessing the group. This year the group has continued to welcome those that have been newly diagnosed, as well as those who have been living with HIV for a long time.

Do you have questions about HIV that you feel afraid to ask at clinic?

Do you feel alone in your diagnosis?

Would you appreciate support & discussion with women facing similar challenges?

We hope you will be able to join us and find an encouraging and supportive welcome.

Comments from the group:

*'Help in dealing with loneliness,
'Relaxing atmosphere'*

*'Safe environment and support
from peers'*

*'Social interaction and support
on a level playing field'*

*'Where serious issues have
been discussed and there has
been overwhelming support for
those who have found it
challenging'*

• **new* MEN'S GROUP**

The aim of this group is to provide heterosexual men who access our service with a platform to freely discuss relevant issues and to address the specific needs of this service user group.

Starting a new men's group with a main focus on improving health and wellbeing of men living with HIV in Leeds has had its advantages and challenges. Research has shown that generally men don't like talking about their worries and this has meant it has been a big task for myself and my colleagues to discuss the idea of a peer support group to the men. Surprisingly, when the idea was presented to the 'blokes', it was welcomed by many. Due to the positive response, a couple of meetings were convened to form the group and the group was finally launched last year.

During meetings with service users prior to the group's launch, some of the needs raised included;

- Disclosure to a new partner
- Understanding/Awareness of side-effects of HIV medication.
- Establish/Improve social support/interaction
- Establish and sustain support relationships
- Domestic Violence



As the English saying goes 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', the group wanted to have some social events and activities. Activities suggested included: local trips, picnics, gym sessions and football sessions.

The group meets fortnightly on Mondays 4 - 6pm. In the 5 sessions we discussed topics including; disclosure, and HIV criminalisation & the implications to people living with HIV. We also had a debate on whether drinking alcohol increases one's vulnerability to HIV infection. The group had a social on 2nd October at Hollywood Bowl in Kirkstall and a bbq after. We encourage heterosexual men accessing our service to attend, for 'no man is an Island' and humans are by nature interdependent on one another for emotional survival. Individuals can feel helpless & hopeless when confronted by a crisis and that's when the importance of support groups comes as a reminder they are not alone, and help is just a meeting away.

We are working to make the group exceptional by ensuring it is peer led, provides up to date reliable information, meets regularly & provides a clear confidentiality policy.

Prevention and Peer Education

The Leeds Skyline team has over the last three years been making in-roads among African Communities in the Leeds area, to provide a package of HIV prevention strategies. The major challenge has always been to establish the initial rapport with a cross section of communities and providing them with a picture of current HIV trends that necessitate such interventions.

Breakthroughs in HIV awareness have also slowly been made in relation to particular *faith* groups that have a large number of members of the African communities. Attempts to work with faith groups in this endeavour have in the past not always been met with favourable responses. The 'instinctive' reaction in some quarters has been to prevent messages filtering in from the 'outside' that may disturb the congregation.

The plan for the future is to gauge the impact of these interventions. While evaluations of each particular session on HIV awareness or prevention have been carried out, there is now a need for more holistic pursuits into whether there have been significant changes among the members of these communities in relation to sexual behaviours.

Engaging African communities or groups needs sustained partnerships. We are therefore happy to link with anyone, if not to explain what we do and our objectives in the fight against further HIV transmissions, to share ideas, information and experiences through various forms of sessions (seminars, workshops, outreach, e.t.c)

Please call DJ for more information or if you want to volunteer with prevention team



Also at Skyline....

Positive Self Management Program (PSMP)

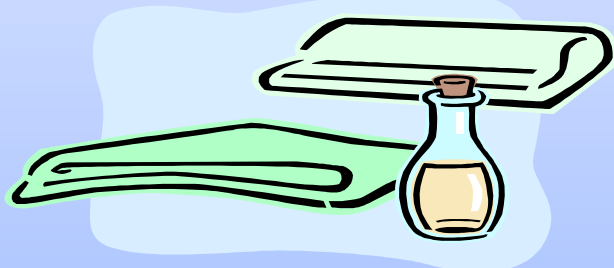
The PSMP is a peer led seven week course that is part of the Expert Patients Program. Our volunteers who deliver the course are all living with HIV and are not health professionals . They all became tutors after attending the course. We deliver the course twice a year and allow 14 people on each course.

The course looks at action planning and problem solving. You will be required to set an action plan for the coming week, every week. We also look at dealing with your healthcare professionals, sex, intimacy and disclosure. Health eating and exercise covered. Sessions are highly participative, clients are able to provide support to each other, thereby increasing their own confidence.

The PSMP was developed at Stanford University Patient Education Research Center and first delivered in 1994. The text of the course has been recently updated and contains more up to date information on 'living wills' and 'enduring power of attorney'.

This course will not conflict with any anti-HIV treatment that you may be having and is an additional way of addressing and improving your health needs.

Our next course starts May 2011. Please call Scott at the office if you have questions or to book a place



Complementary Therapies

Our therapy service, which now runs 2 days per week, offers sessions in the following:

- Massage
- Reflexology
- Indian head massage
- Reiki

Applying for a therapy is easy. Just ask for an application form from anyone in the office. There are many benefits from having a series of therapies such as: relief from stress, pain, side effects, increased well being, relaxation, improved self esteem and many



Many people cope with everyday problems and stresses, but the sheer number of difficulties faced by people with HIV, often stretches their coping abilities to and beyond their limit. Isolation because of prejudice and secrecy reduces the support people would normally access if they were having difficulties. Talking to others, if you are able to, can be very helpful and may help you find possible solutions to some of your worries and difficulties. You may find talking to someone in an HIV organisation, such as Skyline or to someone else with HIV, can also be beneficial.

If you feel you are experiencing psychological or mental health difficulties related to HIV, you can also access the specialist counselling service at Skyline, provided by Angela Lavery. Angela can offer a variety of help which includes a full assessment of your needs and difficulties. This service is confidential and available to people with HIV living in Leeds and accessing services at Skyline. If you feel this would be beneficial you can discuss this with one of the staff at Skyline who can arrange an appointment for you to see Angela

Together for Life!

One Saturday afternoon every two months Skyline is host to a group of young people from all over Leeds who are living with/affected by HIV. Last year the group spent time getting to know each other over sessions like smoothies making, dance and DJ workshops. They explored healthy & effective ways of expressing feelings and emotions and enjoyed trips to Nando's & Flamingo Land. This year's sessions will be a mixture of fun activities, trips and looking closer together at topics like HIV, relationships and careers. The group is always open to newcomers 13 -19yrs.



Mum & Tots



Leeds Skyline Mums and Tots group meets on Tuesdays once a month from 12 - 2pm.

The group encompass play activities, child development, peer support and family life. The aim of the group has been to support mums in helping their babies or toddlers to grow and be confident in developing their vital skills, imagination and creativity.

Recent events & activities...

WAD fundraiser

In [December 2010](#) The Skyline Fund-raising Team, Ian Horbury, Paul Box & Simon Battensby, held our 3rd fund-raising event of the year at Blayds' Bar in Leeds. The event was a Christmas & World Aids Day celebration, was very well attended (despite the snow), and was a great success. Events during the evening consisted of 5 acts strutting their stuff, a raffle, and an auction for various prizes, including tickets for The X Factor tour. The evening went fantastically well, and fun was had by all. The total raised was £470.00, which took our total for all 3 events during 2010 to a grand total of £1292.80. The money we raise goes towards our crisis fund. We are now looking forward to the fundraising events of 2011 and beyond!

Valentines fundraiser

Anyone walking into the Leeds Hilton on 12th February this year would have found themselves entering a fabulous evening of entertainment and laughter at the Skyline Red Ribbon Ball. Gourmet food was enjoyed in a room showered with treats and decorations, the cherry on top being a glamorous raffle presented by Leeds' own dazzling Ryvita Von Cheese. The soundtrack of the evening was provided by a selection of live bands providing dance floor classics from the 40s to now. Over £2600 was raised from the event, which will all be fed directly into providing practical and emotional support for those living with or affected by HIV in Leeds. The Skyline team would like to thank everyone that supported the ball, all those that attended and each person that gave their time and efforts to volunteer on the night- it wouldn't have been the same without you!



Positive Yorkshire Conference

On the 3rd December 2010 Leeds Skyline had the pleasure of being involved again in the annual Positive Yorkshire Conference in Leeds. A partnership of HIV support agencies from across the region joined together to plan & deliver HIV related workshops & seminars for a wide varieties of professionals. Delegates representing sectors such as health, welfare and housing attended to gain knowledge to help them ensure their services are well able to meet the needs of people living with HIV.

We delivered a session about the advantages and challenges of delivering HIV prevention messages with faith communities.

Our presentation highlighted the challenges and explored the need to involve faith groups in HIV prevention strategies. They have a pivotal influence in the communities and there are members of their congregations who are affected by HIV. We suggested the pastoral messages of positive behaviour need to include; a) challenging risky sexual attitudes & conduct b) encouraging an end to discrimination and stigma towards HIV positive persons; c) the fact that those affected and infected need care and support from everyone. The presentation strove to re-iterate that faith groups have a duty to be responsive and compassionate.

Introducing the current staff team...

Leeds Skyline has two teams that work closely together to serve those living in our city with information and support around HIV. Our team is enhanced by a number of amazing volunteers that help us with our work here and in the community.

Ndumiso Dube: Prevention Team Co-ordinator
Fiona Adamu: Families and Young People's Peer Educator
Nyambe Mukelabai: Community Engagement Officer
Robert Houlgate: Social Care Support Worker
Scott Gledhill: Social Care Support Worker
Ndumiso Dube: Social Care Support Worker
Ian Horbury: Support worker Assistant
Alison Cawood: Administrator
Becki Bryan: Project Coordinator
Abigail Smith: Project Coordinator
Jeni Hirst: BHA Director of Sexual Health

Volunteering at Skyline- WE want you!

Our volunteers play a vital role in the running of Leeds Skyline. Volunteers do a mixture of roles, from helping out at a fundraiser to covering the reception desk for a couple of mornings / afternoons a week to supporting clients on a 1-2-1 basis. We fully train all our volunteers for the role they choose and give them on-going support & supervision to ensure they are happy with the work they are doing.

People volunteer to help us for all sorts of reasons, which may include:

- giving something back, because they have received help and now want to use their experience to help others
- Up to date work experience
- A way to return to work after a lengthy absence

Volunteer training is compulsory and it takes place one evening a week for 6 weeks. During the course we aim to equip you with the skills, knowledge and confidence to become a volunteer and let you learn more about HIV & the important related issues. Roles taken by volunteers include: reception, 1 - 2 - 1 support with clients, working with prevention passing on HIV prevention strategies to communities, fundraising and assisting with groups

The next training starts Monday 6th June 2011. Please contact the office for details.

A service user's story

I was diagnosed as HIV positive in October 2010. I was unwell in hospital and a doctor asked me if they could take a blood sample to test for HIV. I agreed and when I found out I felt like it was the end of the world for me. First TB, and now HIV. I learnt about HIV at school when I was younger as my home country is the number one in the world for cases of HIV. A few days later, I was surprised when someone came to visit me, saying they were from Skyline. I was very upset at that time and I felt that it was the end of the world. A week after being diagnosed, I was out of hospital and was feeling scared about going to Skyline. I was worried that I might meet someone that knows me and that they would tell people I am HIV positive. I found the strength to go and after meeting other people there I felt I had been given a second chance at life.

I feel I have got a second chance to do things right in my life. At Skyline I met people that had been diagnosed with HIV for a long time, even for over 10 years. That changed everything for me as before I used to think having HIV means I will die sooner. At Skyline you learn different things like how to cope with situations you are in and people are supporting each other. If you are living with HIV and feel scared to come to Skyline I would like you to know that you are not alone. We hope you come to join our groups and find that you can have a load taken off your shoulders and you can even help others who are in the same situation.

Please feel free to write in with your own experiences if you would like us to feature these in the next issue. All information will be kept completely **confidential**.

A volunteer's story

I started volunteering at Skyline 8 months ago. I cover reception three times a week and also play a large role within the fundraising team at Skyline which has organised three events over the last year.

In the time that I have spent at Skyline I have met some great people and really enjoyed the experiences I have had there.

I love meeting people. I enjoy the feeling of making someone's day a little brighter, which is nearly always the case.

The fundraising events in particular have given me a real sense of achievement and I have really enjoyed seeing people having a good time at the events.

I would recommend anyone to give volunteering a try

Simon

Need office space? Looking for a venue for running a group?

The Skyline office is located on floor 4 of a modern office block in central Leeds. Any of our rooms can be hired 9 - 5 Mon - Fri. The following rooms are available, and come equipped with telephone ports and heating and cooling systems:

- 1 small room equipped with a massage table
- 1 small room with a large desk
- 1 small room with a filing cabinet and chairs
- 1 meeting room with a table and chairs to seat 10 people
- 1 meeting room with comfy chairs to accommodate up to 20 people
- 1 reception area with desk, chairs and tables which can be moved around
- 1 small kitchen area with dishwasher
- 1 computer area with 4 computers, all equipped with broadband internet access. We are also able to provide refreshments and resources such as flip charts and pens as required. Please telephone Becki or Abigail on 0113 2449767 or e-mail us at leedsskyline@thebha.org.uk for further information



The office is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm but the office will be closed for the following dates::

Tuesday 5th April - staff training

Friday 22nd April - Easter bank holiday
Monday 25th April - Easter bank holiday
Friday 29th April - Royal Wedding bank holiday
Monday 2nd May - May day bank holiday
Monday 30th May - Spring bank holiday