

Break the Chain: Time to Test Campaign

What is the Breaking the Chain: Time to test campaign?

Covid-19 presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity in the fight against HIV and syphilis. Since the introduction of social distancing measures in March, most people have not been having sex outside their household, which means much fewer people have been exposed to HIV and syphilis.

The [Break the Chain: Time to test](#) campaign, founded by 56 Dean Street (Chelsea and Westminster Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), seeks to maximise the current social distancing situation to identify everyone who has undiagnosed HIV so that they can start treatment early, improve their health, and prevent them from passing on HIV to anyone else.

Now is the time: we have an unprecedented opportunity to stop HIV transmissions

When someone first catches HIV, they are highly infectious and more likely to pass on HIV than normal. However, HIV infections take between 4-8 weeks before they can be identified through testing. With lockdown having started in March, there are many fewer people in this 'blindspot' who would otherwise be missed, and testing now could identify almost everyone who has the virus.

If those who test positive start effective treatment straight away, the virus will become undetectable and they can't pass it on to anyone else. PHE will also provide the option for people to test for syphilis.

56 Dean Street

- 56 Dean Street developed the Break the Chain: Time to Test campaign aimed at encouraging gay and bisexual men, mainly in London, to test for HIV.
- As the originators of the campaign, they play the lead role in the development of the campaign creative.
- In the expanded campaign, 56 Dean Street responsibilities will be for the promotion of the campaign to gay and bisexual men in London.

Terrence Higgins Trust

- Terrence Higgins Trust are supporting 56 Dean Street in promoting the campaign via media and PR and paid promotion
- THT helps expand the reach of the campaign beyond London and to also reach other populations at higher risk of getting HIV, particularly black African people.
- THT has also committed 1,000 free self-testing kits to cover areas where there is no provision of online tests (in self-testing a person takes their own blood sample from a finger prick and uses a test kit to get an immediate result, similar to home pregnancy test kits).

HIV Prevention England (commissioned by PHE)

- HIV Prevention England (HPE) will promote the campaign via the It Starts With Me campaign using PR and targeted digital promotion across England over a period of up to four weeks.

- Promotion will be targeted to black African people and gay and bisexual men (excluding London) across England.
- HPE are also engaging the HIV sector to get involved and to support the campaign.
- HPE is supporting the production of campaign promotion materials to distribute to others for further promotion.

Public Health England

- Public Health England (PHE) is supporting the campaign via HIV Prevention England and <https://Freetesting.HIV>, the national HIV and syphilis self-sampling service. Self-sampling involves a person taking their own sample using a specimen collection kit and sending it to a laboratory for testing. The results are then communicated to the individual directly, usually via text message for negative results and telephone for reactive results.
- PHE is opening <https://Freetesting.HIV> from 5 June 2020 so that residents of all local authorities in England can order a free self-sampling kit. PHE has committed to supplying 7,000 free HIV tests, including syphilis opt-out testing throughout the promotional period.
- PHE will also provide co-ordination and leadership of the public health system through liaison with local authorities, professional bodies and ADPH to ensure that activity is as effective as possible.

PHE has produced [additional information](#) for the public on getting sexual and reproductive health (SRH) help during COVID-19. PHE has also produced a [message](#) for other services working with higher risk groups to consider the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach for SRH.

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