

Adele Senkubuge & Yvonne Richards-Cooper @ George  
House Trust

# Background

We secured funding for a 12-month long women's empowerment project which we named "Stepping Up".

The aim of this project was to support women living with HIV to understand the effects of self stigma and empower them to live healthy and confident lives.

The project was co-designed with women to be build on the achievements of our previous project "Stepping Out".

We focused on normalizing HIV as a long-term manageable condition.

women's:

- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Confidence, skills and employability
- Reduce Self-Stigma
- Understanding and knowledge about HIV
- Confidence navigating sex and relationships
- Confidence when talking about

# Project Activities

- Three-day retreat
- Two-day peer mentor training (delivered by 4M Mentor Mothers)
- 8 workshops in person and online
- Strutting into Power Event including spoken word performances and catwalk
- Life coaching provided by TLC



GEORGE  
HOUSE TRUST  
HIV POSITIVE LIVING



# Stepping Up Retreat

The project launched with a weekend retreat at a Mellor House in Stockport.

The retreat included workshops, social time, relaxation therapies and planning for the wider project.

We were also joined by representatives from Positively UK and 4M Mentor Mothers.

**12** women attended

- **100%** of attendees said they felt more confident about HIV afterwards
- **100%** said they felt more confident about the future
- **100%** said they felt better socially connected to other women living with HIV

## 4M Mentor Mother Training

Training delivered by 4M Network in partnership with clinicians from Manchester Foundation Trust.

Two-day course which was attended by 7 women



## Workshops

A working group of service users helped us to create the program, with many of them volunteering their time to help at the workshops.

8 workshops held over consecutive weeks; topics included:

- Self-stigma & self-compassion
- Sex and relationships
- Panel making and sewing
- Public speaking and confidence building
- Creative writing
- Dance and performance

Workshops were delivered in partnership with Positively UK, Manchester Foundation Trust, Oldham Writing Squad and local dance artists.



## What did the women think?

- 100% said they felt more positive after the workshop
- 100% reported benefitting from the session
- 98% felt more socially connected to other women living with HIV
- 98% felt more confident in their ability to manage HIV and live well



# Strutting into Power

A night where we came together to celebrate the beauty, creativity and resilience of women living with HIV.

The event was held at the Whitworth Art Gallery and was delivered in partnership with Positively UK and Catwalk4Power.

21 Women took part and performed spoken word performances, dances and strutted on the catwalk.

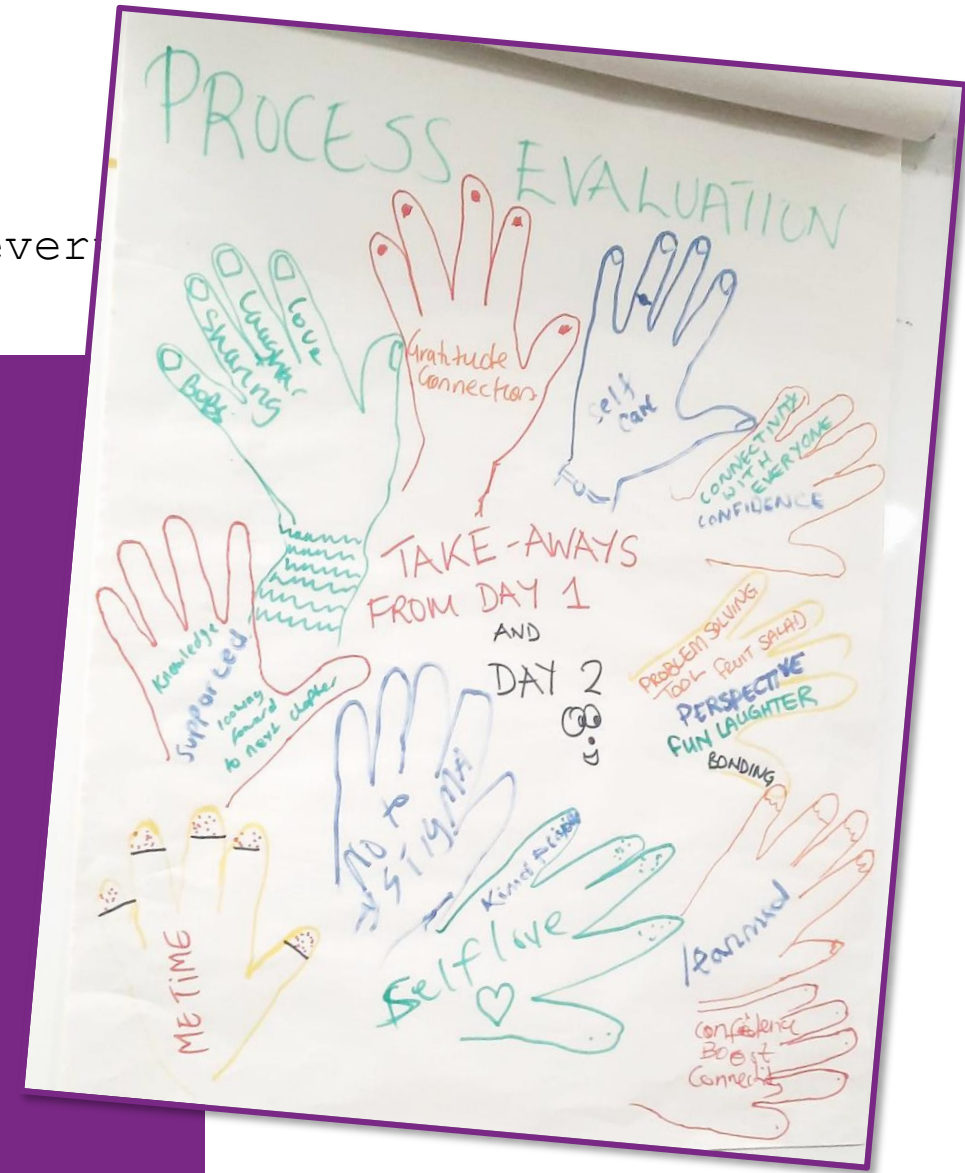
Over 60 people attended including participants families, friends and partners



# Measuring our impact

After the project we sent out an Impact Survey to everyone

- **100%** said they felt more confident about life with HIV
- **93%** said that it made them feel more confident when talking about HIV
- **93%** felt involved in shaping activities that were organised
- **92%** said the project made them more likely to attend other events and activities
- **100%** said that they felt more socially connected to women living with HIV



# Feedback – in her own words...

*"I came to the conclusion that I'd take the first step to owning my experiences by telling my story because the people who surrounded me were so supportive, unbiased and caring that I felt*

*that even if I was scared, I didn't have to worry because I had my sisters there to support me. I was proud to be part of it."*

*"I really enjoyed the sessions*

*"I enjoyed being away from my daily life and waking up to like-minded women. Made friends that I will most likely keep in touch with. Workshops brought out the*



# Learning Outcomes

- The importance of exploring and defining stigma and self-stigma with attendees
- The healing power of sharing and connecting with other positive people; a safe space to process stigma, shame and judgement
- Recognising the value of prolonged support/interventions to allow women to shift their view of their status and themselves:  
Normalisation of HIV
- The importance of co-design and the involvement of HIV positive facilitators
- The value of talking about HIV in spaces beyond George House Trust

# Future Aspirations

- Expand co-design model usage
- Continue to focus on challenging self-stigma and building resilience
- Replicate the model with a focus on the LGBTQ+ community, men and mixed groups

*Thank  
you*

for your  
attention.

*Let's Talk!*